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THE BIRTH OF A DYNASTY

BY

H. PLUNKET WOODGATE

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TO
BRIGADIER-GENERAL J. B. WELLS
C.M.G., C.B.E., D.S.O.

AND
ALL WHO SERVED
IN
THE LOYAL REGIMENT
(NORTH LANCASHIRE)
BETWEEN THE YEARS
1914 AND 1946

•

THE OBSTACLE MAN

BY

H. PLUNKET WOODGATE

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CHAPTER I

TWO SISTERS

MARSEILLES in 1789.

It was in many respects the same as it is to-day. In the centre of the bay stood the spectacular rock which holds the Chateau d'If, at that time a mere nuisance to shipping. It had not yet reached the immortality that was later conferred on it by Alexandre Dumas. Marseilles was, as it still is, one of the most important ports on the Mediterranean coast. Its beauty was enhanced by the ships which glided along with their huge sails bulging in the breeze, carrying merchandise from all parts of the world.

Compared with the harbour, the town of Marseilles was far from being colourful. It had two important industries, soap, which was made from the grease and fat of dead animals, and paper from soiled linen and filthy rags. Hence the prevailing feature of the town was an unpleasant mixture of dirt and stench that pervaded its narrow streets and small houses, causing all manner of sickness and disease. The manufacture of these two commodities still continues in Marseilles to this day, but the conditions are improved beyond recognition.

The people of Marseilles have always had many characteristics peculiar to themselves. They were kindly, polite, but above all, progressive. They considered their town to be a rival of Paris and might easily have varied a popular English slogan by claiming that "what Marseilles says to-day, Paris will say to-morrow." In this year of 1789, Paris had no political conscience whatever. The Court of King Louis and Queen Marie Antoinette was distinguished for its music, colour and gaiety, and the Parisians followed in their own particular way the example that their sovereigns were setting. But Marseilles had none of these things. The population of Marseilles consisted of a few wealthy merchants and manufacturers alongside a vast majority of ragged paupers who worked and slaved, by day and by night, in those unwholesome factories. The place was seething with discontent.

The smoke and squalour of the city presented a vivid contrast to the beauty and freshness of the hills which lay to the north and west. From the higher ground radiated all those magnificent roads that led to Nice, Toulon, Lyons and the Spanish border. On those grassy hilltops lived the Marseilles *bourgeoisie*, the wealthy merchants and manufacturers. Here the houses were large and attractive, and one of them, seemingly more luxurious than any of its neighbours, was the property of Francois Clary, stated to be the richest and most prosperous soap merchant in the whole of Marseilles.

It was in the autumn of 1789—mid-September to be exact—that a certain regiment came marching along the country road to the north of the town and halted to camp on the brow of the hill. It was a good enough regiment, though it would hardly have seemed so to modern eyes. They did not march in three's or even four's, but straggled all over the road. They were not interested in cigarettes and their chins

were somewhat prickly—there were no cigarettes and no safety razors. They had a band but the instruments were just drums and French cornets. The regiment was, however, held in high esteem by the citizens and farmers of Marseilles, to whom it was known by its French title of "Royal-la-Marine."

They reached their camping-ground and halted. At first glance their officers appeared to be dandy and effeminate, and the men to be slovenly and full of complaints. But a second glance revealed that in just one sector there was discipline of a high order, due possibly to a system which was observed in certain French regiments of that day and which is still used by the Foot Guards of Great Britain. One company was set apart over and above all the others, owing to its bearing and efficiency. It was called the Grenadier Company, and in this case seemed to be under the sole control of a Sergeant, a tall and imposing figure of a man with piercing brown eyes and an unusually prominent nose. This man seemed to be everywhere, jotting notes, giving orders and generally making arrangements. He was most assiduous in his work and no detail escaped him.

The commissioned officers seemed to be of little account. Having arrived at their journey's end, most of them disappeared with the object of securing themselves good and comfortable billets in the homes of rich residents. The tall Sergeant, however, remained with his men, and eventually a semblance of neatness and order began to become visible on the rolling field. It was not till he had completed all the necessary dispositions that he decided to follow his officers' example and go and seek for a billet himself.

He spruced himself and stepped into the main street. For a time he scanned the magnificent view of the harbour below, the lovely blue sea, the town itself, marred by the pall of smoke that rose from the houses and factories. He then became aware of soft footsteps approaching in his direction. He looked round and saw a pair of little girls who were obviously sisters, and who seemed to be thrilled at the sight of so many men in uniform. As they passed him they both smiled and bade him "Bon jour, Monsieur."

For several minutes he stood there, watching them. No one could deny that they made a pretty picture with their long dresses, their school books, their clutched hands, their guileless innocence in the midst of those coarse-mouthed soldiers. just like "A pair of Queens," the tall man said to himself, quite unaware that he was uttering a prophecy.

After a while the two little girls turned down a side street and the tall sergeant decided to follow them. The street was called the Rue des Phocéens, and it ended in a large house which the two little girls entered by a back door. The sergeant had in his possession a requisition order and he really thought that such a house would be a pleasant home for himself during the stay of his regiment in Marseilles. He therefore approached and gently knocked at the door.

He was surprised at the speed with which the door was opened, a fact that seemed to indicate that his action was not unexpected. He knew of course that all women have eyes at the back of their heads when they thought they were being followed by a man, but he did not know that this faculty also applied to school children. He entered the room which turned out to be a kitchen, drew himself up to attention, and addressed himself to the younger girl.

"My regiment has just arrived in Marseilles, and I have come to inquire if there is a room in your house where I can be billeted."

"Come in, Monsieur, and sit down."

He obeyed and looked round the room. The little girl who had spoken to him was a plump brunette of about eight years old. She was by no means a beauty but she had large eyes, a pleasant and mischievous look on her face that made her most attractive. Her sister was a year or two older and was fair and slender. She was obviously of the domesticated type and occupied entirely with the meal that was being prepared.

They in their turn saw a tall soldier with a distinguished face, dressed in a uniform that fitted closely to his superb figure. He was fully aware of the deep impression that he was making on these two children. He had already learned that in commercial towns like Marseilles, ladies were very susceptible to uniform.

"You are from Marseilles, Monsieur?"

"No. I have not been here before. I am a Gascon."

At these words the two girls looked at one another and smiled. Gascons had the reputation of being great boasters, and the soldier knew it. And now the elder girl spoke for the first time.

"Monsieur, are you an officer?"

"Yes, of course. At least I am—er and I am not an officer. I am a *sous-officier*, what you call a Sergeant. But why do you ask me?"

"Because our father is particular on that point."

At these words the face of the soldier underwent a change. He had been embarrassed by the question, and the pleasant smile left his face. The elder girl, thinking she had offended him, turned to her cooking and did not speak again.

"Does not your father realise that a great change is coming over France? A change that will affect all our institutions, including the army. Listen . . . Do you hear that music?"

The silence in the room was broken by the humming of a tune in the street outside. All three recognised the air. It was a popular tune of the mob. And then the younger girl spoke.

"Oh, monsieur, that is a terrible song. It is the song of the men who would kill my father and take us—"

"Why should they kill your father? Is he an—an aristocrat?"

"Ah, no, Monsieur; he is only a merchant. But he is rich, one of the richest in Marseilles. And of course we do not like the mob."

"I don't like them either. But I am not afraid of them for perhaps they will do me good. Look at me now. I am only a Sergeant, and I ought to be a General—"

"A Gascon general, Monsieur." This child was really very cheeky and her eyes had an impish glare,

"Don't laugh at me, Mademoiselle. I cannot help thinking that it is my great opportunity to get promotion. But there, you wouldn't understand. Tell me, little lady, what is your name?"

"Clary. My father is François Clary, and my sister, she is Julie Clary. I am the youngest of the family and my name is Desirée, but my intimate friends call me Eugénie. You, Monsieur, may call me Eugénie."

Under other circumstances this soldier would have burst into laughter at the naivete of the compliment. But this time he did not do so. Instead of that he blushed a deep red and was ashamed of himself for doing so. According to his code, Grenadier Sergeants at

the age of twenty-seven had no right to blush at remarks made to them by little schoolgirls.

"And you, Monsieur. What is your name?"

In reply he placed his hand in his knapsack and withdrew a sort of pocket-book neatly wrapped in paper, which he undid, thereby displaying a black and white pamphlet. He handed it to the little girl who spelled out the name on the cover.

"B-E-R-N-A-D-O-T-T-E, Bernadotte. . . Jean Baptiste . ." She burst into silvery laughter. "You must now give me permission to call you John the Baptist. Thank you, Monsieur, for the souvenir. I shall always keep it in memory of you."

She clasped it to her bosom and in an instant Bernadotte was on his feet.

"Give it back to me, you little monkey. It's my pay-book."

But Desirée was too quick for him. She had already jumped up and she was dashing round the table, waving the booklet in the air. His heavy military boots clanked on the kitchen floor, making his movements awkward and clumsy. Julie burst into peals of laughter and clapped her hands. The chase grew quite hot but came to a sudden and abrupt end at the sound of a voice from the inner door.

"Desirée, what is this? Who is this man?"

The words were spoken by a proud, handsome woman who was obviously the mother of the girls, and it was little Desirée, gasping and out of breath, who answered.

"Oh, maman, this is John the Baptist or rather Sergeant Bernadotte, who wants a billet in our house."

The lady turned to Bernadotte, who bowed and stood to attention.

"You are not an officer, are you?"

"No, madame. I am a *sous-officer*."

"Then in that case, Monsieur, I regret that we cannot take you into our house. I have a husband and two young daughters, and our rule is that nobody beneath the rank of officer can be billeted here."

The dark eyes flashed in anger, and for a moment it looked as if Bernadotte was about to protest. But he checked his wrath and bowed to the inevitable. He pulled himself together and moved towards the door. At the threshold he looked back and saw Desirée winking wickedly, pulling faces and even holding up his pay-book before dropping it into the bosom of her dress.

Deeply mortified, he stepped back into the street, muttering the forbidden slogan that the "Revolution would change all that sort of thing." He would have liked to have stopped in that house with those impish children and their stately mother who had spoken to him firmly—not harshly. He winced when he thought of their hospitality being wasted on any of the nincompoops who were his superior officers.

And that was how he first met them. In later life he often told the story, which he embellished with Gascon exaggeration. It was also told by no less a person than Her Majesty Queen Desideria of Sweden, in these words:—

One day a soldier called at our house in Marseilles with a requisition order for a billet. I was a very little girl at the time. My father had made it a rule that only officers could be billeted on us, for he did not like the language and noises of common soldiers. So he was turned away and my father wrote to his Colonel telling him what had been done, and asking to send an officer instead. The soldier was Bernadotte, who later married me and made me a Queen.

CHAPTER II

A TRIVIAL INCIDENT

FIVE years have elapsed since the visit of the tall Sergeant to the Clary house in the Rue des Phocéens. The Revolution, to which he had referred in the previous chapter had, in 1794, become a grim reality, and was raging with unparalleled violence in the town of Marseilles. It was in that year and in that town that the Revolution started ; it was in that year and in that town that a series of events took place which, though outwardly trivial and unimportant, formed the curtain-raiser to the stupendous drama which enveloped France, Europe and the whole world for the next twenty years. Perhaps it was Destiny, or Chance, or a combination of both of them that decreed that the first bombshell should fall on the house of Madame Clary and her two little daughters.

Up to this time the Revolution had brought little change to the Clary family beyond the fact that the two little girls were removed from school, thereby bringing their education to an abrupt and premature conclusion. Many of their friends were forced to suffer imprisonment and worse, but they themselves came through it all unscathed. The family was quiet, law-abiding and unobtrusive, and soon adapted itself to the changed conditions. The name of François Clary commanded deep respect from all classes, and thus he succeeded in keeping not only his head but also his very substantial fortune. Indeed, his financial position was so favourable that he actually wrote a letter to the Parisian authorities asking for an application to buy "papers of nobility." It is impossible to say whether he ever gave this question serious consideration or whether that letter was just a passing fancy. We do know, however, that he never received a reply to that letter ; and we also know that he never divulged the contents of it to any member of his family. At the same time it is certain that he could have had no conception, in the penning of this letter, of the dazzling careers that it was ordained to open for his two little daughters.

At the opening of 1794 the family consisted of M. François and Madame Clary ; one son, Etienne, who was married to a lady called Suzanne, and who was a capable business man and a partner in the firm ; and the two young girls, Julie and Desirée. There were others as well, for the parents had apparently contracted previous marriages, which meant for these two girls many half-brothers and half-sisters as well as the many "steps" and "in-laws" that are so common in Continental families. Up to the end of 1793 it was a happy, contented and well-ordered family, pleasant in manners, beaming with kindness, but at the same time narrow and suburban in their views of life.

In January, 1794, François Clary died suddenly, and the family was plunged into grief. He left the bulk of his fortune to be divided among his three youngest children, Etienne, Julie and Desirée. But only a few days after his funeral Suzanne Clary burst into the house in the *Phocéens* to inform her mother-in-law that Etienne had been arrested.

"But, Suzanne," said Madame Clary, "Etienne has committed no crime, and, besides, he is not a fool and knows exactly how to

deal with these people." Etienne had already succeeded in extricating various friends and relations from the grip of the Revolutionaries.

"You can never tell what these blackguards will do when once they get a man into their power." This voluble lady was deeply perturbed, alternately laughing and crying.

"If you feel like that, Suzanne, the best thing you can do is to go and see Albitte to-morrow at the Maison Commune. Albitte is a friend of Etienne, and he can probably put matters right."

"The Maison Commune . . . I have never heard of it."

"I know where it is. I will show you, if you like." It was the voice of Desirée who had broken into the conversation.

"There you are, Suzanne. Don't worry any more. Desirée will go with you to-morrow, and I am certain that by the evening you will have your husband back in your arms."

On the following morning Suzanne was back in the Clary house, but it was not till later in the day that she and Desirée started off, down the hill and in the direction of the Maison Commune. Suzanne was still perplexed and formed a direct contrast to Desirée, now a strapping and buxom wench of thirteen years, to whom a Revolutionary Office was in the nature of a thrilling experience.

The two girls entered the building and the scene that followed can easily be pictured, for it has become a common and frequent occurrence in a world that tends to grow more and more bureaucratic with every day that passes.

They were directed to a waiting-room, full of people who talked, argued, and gesticulated. In vain Suzanne tried to obtrude herself in front of the others, but she was told politely but firmly that she would have to "wait her turn." And so they both sat down to wait, and Desirée fell fast asleep. After a long interval the name of Clary was called and Suzanne went forward for her interview with Albitte. It did not occur to her to waken the sleeping Desirée.

In the short interview that followed it turned out that among the documents labelled under the hated title of "Aristocratic Correspondence" there had been found a letter written by François Clary, applying for papers of nobility. Suzanne had heard nothing of this, and claimed that even if François Clary had written such a letter, which was obviously private and personal, it was absurd to punish his son for it. To this argument Albitte was in agreement, and apologised for the trouble that had been caused, and gladly handed to her the necessary documents for her husband's release. Suzanne hurried away from the office and Desirée was left behind, still fast asleep.

The afternoon passed, and with the coming of darkness the crowd melted away and the office staff prepared to pack up and go home. One of the clerks, a young man of twenty-seven years, happened to visit the waiting-room and was surprised to find the sleeping girl. He bent down and touched her lightly on the arm.

"*Pardon, mademoiselle, pardon.* But it is late. Past six o'clock."

Desirée woke with a start and beheld in the dim light the clear-cut features of a very good-looking young man.

"Have I been sleeping all this time? Suzanne, where is she?"

"She is not here. All have gone home."

"In that case I must go home, too."

She got up and moved towards the door. The clerk protested.

"But, mademoiselle, you cannot go alone. It is already dark and

the streets of Marseilles are very dangerous at night, especially for a young girl like yourself."

"Then what am I to do?"

"Perhaps, mademoiselle, if you will allow me. I shall be delighted to accompany you to your house."

A few minutes later the two of them walked out of the building.

The young clerk had charming manners, a pleasant voice and plenty of conversation. Desirée was attracted to him, chattering briskly and laughing at his jokes. She learned that he was not a resident of Marseilles, but had only been there a few months. At the same time he had travelled and could converse fluently on many of the Mediterranean islands and places which were unfamiliar to her own very limited geography.

The walk was otherwise uneventful and Desirée seemed to know the way far better than her companion. Only once did Desirée clutch the arm of her escort, and that was when they were walking through a street where there was a great deal of shouting and vulgar jesting. He told her that there was no cause for alarm for it was merely the way these people amused one another.

When they reached the corner of the Rue des Phocéens, Desirée stopped.

"This, Monsieur, is my turning. This is where I live with my mother and sister."

"Oh, so you have a sister. Is she older than you?"

"Yes. Julie is a year older than me. And you, Monsieur, have you brothers and sisters?"

"Have I, indeed? I have four brothers and three sisters, all of them in Marseilles. I have a young brother who——"

"If you have a young brother like yourself, I should be pleased to meet him. What is his work?"

The young clerk did not appear to like this question. His answer came in an uneasy, stammering tone.

"Unfortunately he is not working at all just now. You see, he is a soldier. But there are many who do not like him, for he says such strange things. . . . He is a General."

"What was that you said? If your young brother is a General, then he must be the youngest General in the whole of the French Army. What is his name?"

"His name, Mademoiselle, is Bonaparte, the same as mine. But I am only a clerk . . . Monsieur Joseph Bonaparte, while he . . . he is General Napoleon Bonaparte."

Joseph turned from the Rue des Phocéens and made his way back to the town. He had had a most satisfactory day. He had met a girl who, in spite of her youth, was attractive, and probably very influential in Marseilles. She had given him her name and told him he might call at her house. This was all to the good. But now there was sterner work to be done.

He made his way to that part of the town where Desirée had clutched his arm. He walked quickly and seemed very familiar with his surroundings. There were odd groups of people who conversed in low tones and a great number of lovers, hugging and pressing in dark corners. But Joseph ignored them all and pressed on till he reached a courtyard ending in a mean dwelling.

This he entered and groped his way downstairs till he reached a kind of cellar or garret. It was a dark and dank and filthy room,

practically unfurnished except for a large, dirty table and a small, rickety high-backed chair which faced a cold, cheerless and ashy fireplace. On this chair was sitting a young man whose chin hung low on his breast, and whose hands were dug deep in the pockets of his soiled, white breeches. He was in uniform, wearing an unusually large Napoleonic hat beneath which his hair fell untidily over his shoulders. He made no movement, and yet he was not asleep, for his eyes were open and dilated, looking out of his head with an expression that might have signified anything from utter hopelessness to downright insanity.

Such was Napoleon Bonaparte in the year 1794.

Joseph approached the chair and studied the uncouth object. He was distressed at the forlorn look, and gently laid his hand on his brother's shoulder, but the latter made no response. He then moved a tiny, guttering candle from the mantelpiece, which he laid on the clothless table. After that he placed a couple of chairs into position.

"Come, brother, sit down and talk to me."

The unhappy man allowed himself to be manhandled to the table and the two brothers sat down with the miserable light of the candle between them. Joseph was a very different man to the one who had only a few minutes before been laughing and chaffing with Desirée. He now spoke slowly and deliberately, waiting for answers that did not come.

"Brother, I have not been idle. I have had a word with Albitte, who has been talking to his military friends in the New Army, and he told me that they are well aware of your prowess, as a result of Toulon. But just now they are all too busy looking after themselves and their own jobs for they are cutting one another's throats to get into good positions. They are divided into cliques and factions, all working for power. Would you like to join one of those cliques, brother? . . . Ah, I thought you would not, for there is no pay in anything just now."

"Brother, have you eaten anything to-day?" The other shook his head. "You must be hungry. Have you a room to sleep in? No. . . . You must be tired. You will become very ill. Have you been out of doors to-day?"

At these words the other turned on him and their eyes met. For the first time the younger man broke silence and his voice was low and husky.

"How can I do such things without money? The shops will not give food without payment. I cannot go into the streets for the people shout at me and call me 'the General who cannot pay his washing bill.' The little *gamins* make silly noises and even throw stones at me. How can I go out in the street?"

Joseph could find no answer to this question and merely muttered "We both thought that the Revolution would offer such splendid opportunities for us all."

"Brother, Paris is in the hands of a mob of ruffians and so is Marseilles and every other city of France. They were fools, fools, fools to go and cut down the aristocrats who are the best blood in France. But why talk about it? If you cut down the best trees in a forest, Joseph, what will you get in their place? Weeds! Yes, Joseph, nothing but weeds, weeds, weeds and that is the word that best describes France in the Revolution."

The husky voice had momentarily become sharp and incisive. Joseph was well acquainted with these varying moods, which never perturbed him, though later they were destined to imbue the strongest men with fear and terror. He merely nodded and resumed in a quiet voice

"I agree with you. But perhaps those weeds are only temporary. Some day other trees may arise and the forest will be greater and stronger than it was before."

"Ah, there you are right," and Napoleon smiled at the thought. It was a singularly beautiful smile, but it went as quickly as it appeared and the old look of sadness returned. "And meanwhile . . . meanwhile the greatest giant of the forest must shiver and starve in this miserable garret."

"Don't be so sad, brother. Some day all will come right." Joseph placed his hand in his pocket and withdrew a small purse. "Brother, here is half my pay for this week. It doesn't amount to much, but it is yours. . . . And, oh, there is something else, something that happened only a few minutes ago. I have met a girl who is very pretty and, I believe, very rich. I walked back with her to her house and she has invited me to meet her mother. She has a sister——"

"What is this? Did you say she was rich? There are possibilities, Joseph. You must marry this girl. Yes, marry her for her money. For me, at this moment money is more important than anything else. Get me a rich woman. I care not if she has but one eye, no teeth and is as old as the Pyramid." He had risen to his feet and was stamping on the cold, hard floor. He had become in a twinkling the Man of Action, the Napoleon of the Future. "Get me a rich woman, Joseph. What does it matter who she is, provided she is rich, provided she will give me the means to fulfil my Destiny."

"Brother, there you go again. Talking and dreaming of the future while we both have to live in the present. That money will at any rate help to pay for your food and lodging. And now I am going to tell you something. You may indeed have a Destiny, and I will do all I can to help you to attain it. But as for me, I have a Purpose. And some day you are going to visit this house along with me. In other words, I have already made up my mind that my wife will be of the Clary family and you, brother, must do everything in your power to help me to achieve my Purpose."

Having delivered this oration, Joseph took his brother's arm and they walked out of the grim, dark room and into the street. Their short conversation had contained many exaggerations which are peculiar to the inhabitants of Southern Europe. It was not true that Napoleon had no lodging in the town. There was a house in Marseilles where their mother lived with a huge family. But it was a small house and the accommodation was scanty. The family was entirely dependent on Joseph and Napoleon, and in the straitened condition of the latter, the burden was being borne by Joseph, who gave them all he had and all he earned.

CHAPTER III

NAPOLEON AS MATCHMAKER

At this point it is necessary to give some explanation of the word *bourgeoisie*, which has to some extent been adopted into the English language, and given a totally different meaning to what was originally intended. Thus, in the Victorian era a *bourgeois* was a term of contempt given to wealthy tradesmen who lived in the suburbs of big cities and who endeavoured—often with pitiful results—to imitate the manners, speech and culture of those who possessed better birth and breeding. In later times the word *bourgeois* has been made to personify the wealthy ne'er-do-well who exploits the lowly worker by means of low wages and over-crowded living conditions. In English the word has always been associated with something either contemptible or sinister, suggesting either a sycophant or a bully. In French it has a different meaning.

In France the rise of the *bourgeoisie* was slower than in England, but when it did come, its progress was very rapid. And the time when it came was the time of this story, namely the Revolution. The *bourgeoisie* were on the whole on the side of the Revolutionaries, being Republicans rather than Royalists. Anyhow, they were regarded as such by their contemporaries, and the result was that the mob was inclined to regard with sympathy and tolerance the self-made industrialist as opposed to the man of noble birth and heritage. The French Revolution was primarily directed against noble birth rather than great riches. And it was for that reason that the lives and properties of many of the industrialists were preserved intact—as indeed was the case with the Clary family.

This family was strictly *bourgeoise*. Their whole horizon did not extend beyond the boundaries of Marseilles, which they loved, and which they really believed to be the greatest city in the world. Along with their urban patriotism, there marched a spirit of rigid subservience to local conventions, particularly where religion was concerned. What was unorthodox was anathema to them. And it was, therefore, most unusual to find a girl like Desirée inviting Joseph to her house on so slender an acquaintance. It can only be inferred that Francois Clary had brought up his children to a far more modern outlook than was usually to be found among his neighbours and equals.

Joseph Bonaparte duly presented himself on the following day at the Clary house, and his visit was an overwhelming success. He created such a good impression with Madame Clary and her two little girls that he was asked to come again, and soon his visits became very frequent and eagerly anticipated by the whole family. He was, however, averse to talking very much about his own brothers and sisters, which made Madame Clary suspicious and inquisitive. She asked her son, Etienne, to find out whatever he could about the Bonaparte family.

"They tell me," said Etienne, whose knowledge of Marseilles was very extensive, "that the family is large and comes from Corsica. The father is dead and they are extremely poor. The two eldest brothers are the most interesting of them all. Joseph is a very good-natured man, with pleasant manners and is liked by everybody. Napoleon, the second brother, is a bit of a mystery and appears to be the laughing-

stock of the townspeople, largely through his own fault. He has become a General owing to his being a specialist in artillery, and he did extremely well in helping to drive the English out of Toulon harbour. But he is brusque and sulky and subject to fits of abstraction, out of which he wakes up suddenly to express vehement and ridiculous views on military subjects which interest nobody but himself.

"He is certainly unusually young to be a General, but he is not the sort that is ever likely to rise to the command of a Division or even a Brigade. He is just a man with an obsession that every battle can be won by means of the skilful employment of artillery. It is a new-fangled idea that has never been proved. Most people think that he will rise no higher than his present rank. But there are a few, a very few, who are convinced that he has a big career in front of him.

"He wears threadbare clothes and shabby, dirty boots, and makes no effort to be on friendly terms with his brother officers. That is in itself a great handicap to his advancement, especially just now when the best positions in the army are given to men with the right kind of influence behind them. As for the rest of the family, I am told they are a queer lot, especially the sisters."

This remarkably frank statement only served to arouse the curiosity of the Clary household.

Their intimacy with Joseph was increasing, and it was not long before he was bold enough to ask for the hand of Desirée. Madame Clary was agreeable, but pointed out the fact that Desirée was only thirteen years old and not of marriageable age. To this Joseph replied that he was willing to wait. Eventually it was decided that Joseph and Desirée would be married on the day when she attained the age of sixteen, meaning a delay of about two and a half years. Everybody was pleased with the arrangement, with the one exception of Julie. The two children had always been so close to one another that the thought of losing her sister worried the elder girl and made her sad and thoughtful.

As soon as the engagement had been fixed, Madame Clary insisted on knowing more about Joseph's family, and Desirée in particular wished to become acquainted with the soldier brother. She had never forgotten her meeting with the tall Sergeant of Marines and the effect that his immaculate uniform had produced on her. Joseph agreed, and as a result the two brothers arrived one afternoon with the object of paying their respects to Madame Clary and her daughters.

The girls had been well forewarned and were prepared, as they thought, for any unusual event that might occur. They believed that they would have to submit to a long discourse on artillery deployment, and viewed the prospect with as much enthusiasm as a modern infants' school would receive a lecture on tank strategy. Not one of them realised the surprise that was in store for them.

When the day came, Madame Clary was quick to note the facial resemblance of the two men, but also reflected that the younger brother had the better forehead, the firmer mouth and the stronger appearance. He had also a strikingly beautiful smile, a characteristic that ran throughout the Bonaparte family. His voice was not so musical as that of Joseph and could rise to a sharp tenor with a peculiar, lashing effect.

At first Joseph addressed himself to Madame Clary on the eternal topic of the day.

"I quite agree with you, Madame, that these times are very harsh for us all. Fate seems to be working against us. If we are rich, we can be arrested and guillotined as suspected aristocrats. Likewise, if we are poor, we can be arrested and imprisoned as mendicants."

Joseph and Madame Clary were sitting together on a sofa. Julie was silently knitting in a corner. Napoleon sprawled in a chair, his legs stretched out in front of him. Desirée was repeatedly casting side-long glances at the first general that she had ever seen.

"And if we are neither rich nor poor," said Madame Clary, "we can equally be arrested, as was the case with my son."

"I do not blame the mob for arresting him," replied Joseph, with his most ingratiating smile; "in fact I am grateful to them, for their action was the means of introducing me to your charming family." He looked towards Desirée, who smiled at him and alternately gazed from one brother to the other. "The mob is suffering from a mistaken outlook in killing our aristocrats. As my brother often says, If you cut down the trees of a forest, you will only get weeds in their place."

"Perhaps there will be newer and better ones that will grow up in time. But just now we are all at a standstill and completely dependent on our friends and families. I think," and here Madame Clary glanced at her two children, "I think I am very fortunate, in that respect."

"You have a large family, Madame?"

It was the first time that Napoleon had spoken. He looked at the elder lady with a most attractive smile.

"I have had in the past a very large family, including four daughters."

"Ah, it is a pity that your elder daughters are married. For, see, I have four brothers. Joseph, who is here, and Louis and Lucien and Jerome. Think, Madame, my four brothers might have married your four daughters, and then we all would have been happy."

"But you! What about yourself? Are you the only one of your family to be left unprovided?"

"Me! I should not be unprovided for. Indeed, I should be better off than any of the others, for I should promptly marry you, Madame."

At these words all burst into laughter, including Madame Clary herself. But the expression on the face of Napoleon was quite serious and he leaned forward as he resumed. "Yes, I would indeed be the most fortunate, for I would be the father of you all and you would be under my control. And I would see to it that you obeyed me, for I would be the First Napoleon. The First Lion of the Forest."

Desirée was greatly amused by the airs and graces that this man was assuming. "That was a grand suggestion, mon Général," she said, "but not quite practicable. I am afraid that you will have to think of something else." But Napoleon was offended—or seemed to be—at the amusement he had caused.

"If I were to make another suggestion," he muttered, "you would only laugh at me."

"Ah, non, non, non," said Desirée, "I think it was a good idea for then I also would have to obey you."

"And I think," said Madame Clary, "that you have another suggestion to make. Won't you tell us what it is?"

"All right, then, I will tell you. Madame, look around you. We are two men and you have two girls. The ages are important. My elder brother is engaged to your younger daughter, leaving your eldest

daughter and myself in the cold. I suggest that it would be better if Joseph married Julie while I married Desirée."

This remark was met with a silence, deep and profound. Joseph turned and looked at Julie, who bent low over her knitting and was suffused with blushes. Up till then nobody had taken much notice of this gentle, shy and religious girl, who had always been regarded as the Cinderella of the family. Since the appearance of Joseph in the circle she had been mentally upset by his good looks, his cheerfulness and affability. But she had kept her secret to herself.

"It seems to me," said Madame Clary, "that mere marriage will not be necessary for this man to get what he wants. He controls us all as it is."

"I agree with you, Madame," said Joseph, turning towards Julie, "I know that I always follow his orders."

In the whole story of human emotions it is doubtful if any passing suggestion has ever been so effective. In a twinkling a double engagement had taken place between two brothers and two sisters. It was clear that Julie would suit Joseph far better than Desirée, who only regarded her first engagement as an amusing interlude, which gave her friends something to talk about. Two and a half years is a long period in the thoughts of a child of thirteen, long enough to allow her a second choice, should she desire it. Julie was not quite sixteen, but Joseph knew that marriage with her could be immediate. He also remembered how his brother had told him to "marry for money," and since her father's death, Julie had a dowry of six thousand pounds—a stupendous figure in those days. A few weeks later, in August, 1794, Joseph Bonaparte and Julie Clary became man and wife.

The engagement of Napoleon and Desirée did not run so smoothly. Within a few weeks of the decision the fortunes of the young man changed, and he was appointed Director of Artillery in the Army of Italy. His duty was to report on the coastal defence of Southern France, and it entailed long and frequent absences from Marseilles. His first recommendation was that a disused fortress in the vicinity should be reconditioned and put to practical use. But the Revolutionary Government being anti-religious, anti-imperial and anti—everything that was normal and sensible detected an anti-Republican spirit in this suggestion and Napoleon was arrested and thrown into prison. This was not a very auspicious start for a would-be bridegroom.

Following the marriage of Joseph and Julie, the Clary family became more intimate with the Bonapartes, and the house in the Rue des Phocéens became known as the Hotel Clary, christened thus by Napoleon himself. Desirée continued to live with them, and it was soon observed that a remarkable change was coming over her. Perhaps it was due to the example of Julie, who had been transformed by marriage into a happy, pleasant and attractive housewife without losing any of her natural reserve and unselfishness. Anyhow, Desirée determined that she would be as good a wife to Napoleon as Julie was to Joseph. She made up her mind to buy a country estate near Marseilles with a lovely house, of which she would be the chatelaine and Napoleon the lord and master.

She confided her dream to her mother, but when 1794 came to a close she observed that good lady to be unusually thoughtful. One has only to think of what that year had meant to Madame Clary. In January she had lost her husband: in the spring her son was arrested, and her younger daughter engaged: in November her elder daughter

was married: and now her younger daughter was engaged again to a somewhat mercurial dictator. All these changes had come with alarming suddenness and developed with amazing speed. It is small wonder that she was tired. What she experienced in that year was a fairly accurate reflection of what was about to take place in France in the next twenty years. And at the end of that period France was also very tired.

The year 1795 dawned and Napoleon's work increased. He was moved to Paris and his visits to Marseilles were spasmodic and infrequent. His affection for Joseph and Julie grew ever warmer, but his attitude to his sister-in-law tended to be cold and distant. The idea of being Lord of Desirée's Manor had pleased him in 1794, but he spurned it in 1795.

He told Joseph that the Government had adopted many of his defence proposals, but had turned down the most important of them all, namely a detailed plan for the invasion of Italy. He told Julie of the receptions and balls which he had attended in Paris, and at which he had been a conspicuous success. These remarks provoked great amusement, for neither Joseph nor Julie could imagine him as a participant in the small talk and tittle-tattle of high society. But it was quite true that he had attended some of these functions, and though he rarely spoke to anyone yet nothing had escaped his observant eye. He noticed above all, that the success of a party did not depend on the twaddle that the guests were talking but rather on the character and bearing of the hostess. And thus a certain change came over his outlook on women. In the world that he visualised the country *châtelaine* played no part: the Dame du Salon was everything.

All this was very disturbing to Desirée. She wrote many letters complaining of his attitude towards her and begging him to write more frequently. But Napoleon was never a good correspondent, and the letters that he wrote to the Hotel Clary were usually addressed to Joseph.

When he came there he insisted on staying with them, and his talk centred round "that lucky fellow, Joseph," or else resolved itself into a long-winded soliloquy about his own destiny. On one of these evenings Desirée accompanied him into the garden and they sat down together. It was a bright, moonlit night—just the night for love and romance.

"That Joseph is a lucky rogue with his nice home, his good money and his excellent wife. Aha, little one, you and I are related now."

"Yes, I am your sister-in-law and some day I shall be your wife."

"My wife, yes. That is in the hands of Destiny. We can control certain things. But we cannot control our Destiny."

"What do you mean by that?"

He was gazing up at the sky, at a point where there was a single bright star, surrounded by a group of smaller ones.

"See, little one. Take your eyes to the high heavens and tell me what you can see."

"I can see a bright star of great beauty and a lot of smaller ones that seem to be paying homage to it."

"What is the name of that bright star?"

"I am not an astronomer. I do not know."

"Then I will tell you. That bright star is *my* star. C'est l'Etoile Napoleon. And there, all around it are my brothers and sisters and the rest of the human race. I watch that star and I tell you, it grows

brighter every night. Nothing can alter my Destiny which is bound up in that star."

"You frighten me when you talk like that. Are you telling me that I shall share your Destiny?"

"I do not know."

"Now, listen to me. I also have a Destiny. And it is my Destiny to be sought by heroes and men of battle. I do not know how my Destiny will begin or how it will end. But I swear that whatever it may be, I shall be true to you till the end of my life. Nothing will ever alter that. I belong to you and to you alone."

"The love of a beautiful and a pure woman is the richest possession that a man can obtain." He put his arm round her waist and kissed her on the cheek. "But a voice tells me that our two Destinies are apart from one another. And another voice tells me that my little Desirée will ever remain my truest and staunchest friend. Perhaps the day may come when you will require my help. And, perhaps, who knows? the day may come when I shall need yours. In either case, you and I shall both have good cause to remember this wonderful night."

CHAPTER IV

THE EVE OF GLORY

At the beginning of 1795 Napoleon left Marseilles for good, in order to take a post in Paris which was closely connected with the Ministry of War. It is hardly necessary to say that he did so without any feeling of sorrow or remorse. He had developed an internal hatred against this city, and in later life was known to frown at the mere mention of its name. To him Marseilles was a city of squalour and scandal; of jeering urchins and revolutionary nitwits; of soap and paper; and, worst of all, the city of his own poverty and imprisonment. His departure had the result of bringing an even closer intimacy between the Hotel Clary and the remainder of the Bonaparte family—an intimacy which, in the eyes of Julie, was the cause of many trying moments and unpleasant incidents.

The remainder of the Bonaparte family consisted of three brothers and three sisters, and the eldest of them was Lucien. This young man had a certain charm of manner, and was at his best when indulging in an argument or discussion on current affairs. Napoleon cherished great ambitions for his future, and was anxious for him to pursue a military career. But Lucien was not easily influenced and preferred to follow his own instincts as a lover of children, home life and animals. This aloofness and independence on his part caused a serious rift between him and his imperious brother, and he was the only one of the male Bonapartes that did not become a king. His life was comparatively uneventful, except for two extreme moments, but through all its vicissitudes he remained a faithful and loyal friend to Joseph and Julie.

Next in order came Louis, a young man of very different calibre. Like Napoleon, he had a propensity for making enemies: unlike Napoleon, he lacked the means of overcoming them. In character, he was sour and selfish, in disposition, lazy and intolerant. In public life, he was both sly and ill-mannered and distrusted alike by those

above and beneath him. The marriage that he later contracted with Hortense Beauharnais was a dismal tragedy, and his posthumous fame rests on the fact that his son, Napoleon III, surrendered the mighty French Empire to the German Army in 1870.

The youngest brother was Jerome, who at this time was a noisy, cheeky and dirty little ragamuffin. He was not a very welcome or desirable visitor to the Clary household. Napoleon was paying for his education at a school which the boy refused to attend. This boy was essentially Corsican, and belonged to a type that one can see to this day among the gharry-drivers in Italy and Southern Europe. In later life he developed the mentality of the modern *gigolo*, and was the despair of Napoleon "because he refused to grow up." For a time he was King of Westphalia, but his reign was short and not very successful. He did, however, take part in the Russian and Waterloo campaigns, and was one of the few commanders on those fields who managed to avoid censure for his behaviour in defeat.

Of the three daughters the eldest was Elisa, whose character was comparable to that of Jerome. She belonged to the type known sometimes in English as a "masculine lady" and in French as a "boy in petticoats." It is a type of woman that the French people have frequently satirised and never admired. She later became Duchess of Tuscany and, it need hardly be added, was never on very friendly terms with either Julie or Desirée.

The other two daughters were Pauline and Caroline. Pauline would be described in modern parlance as a French tart. She was good-looking, had a splendid figure and posed in the nude. She was Napoleon's favourite sister and he always kept her well-supplied with pocket-money. Morally, she was the direct antithesis of Julie and Desirée, and yet, on the thesis that opposites attract one another, we shall learn that she and Desirée became close and intimate friends. She became known as the Princess Borghese. The youngest was Caroline, who was the same age as Desirée, and whom we shall meet again in subsequent pages. Suffice it to say for the present that Julie admitted that she disliked Caroline—and Julie was never known to admit that about anybody else.

Such were the brothers and sisters of Napoleon, the people whom he left behind in Marseilles at the beginning of 1795. Such were the people over whom he never really obtained control. Such were the people who gained gaudy honours and resonant titles by his rise to power. Such were the people who contributed in a great measure to his downfall.

At the beginning of 1795 he came to Paris, which had for a long time been silently beckoning to him. Paris was beginning to resume her own fascinating personality. The lights and glitter of the capital were beginning to appear after the pall and gloom which the Revolution had cast over the gay city. Before long he was making new acquaintances. Up to then he had despised political intrigue, but soon his interest was aroused by a man of the name of Barras.

This man was a downright intriguer, but was at the same time a successful politician, owing to his peculiar ability of "finding the right man for the right place." He had heard about the skill that Napoleon had displayed at Toulon, and let it be known that he wished to meet the young artillery officer. The meeting took place and Barras was convinced that here was a man who would help him to political

advancement. And that, it may be added, was also the impression that Barras left on Napoleon.

This man gave licentious parties which Napoleon frequently attended, and at one of them he met a lady called Josephine, the Viscontesse de Beauharnais, who was believed to be one of the many mistresses of Barras. Be that as it may, at their first meeting she mentioned Toulon and spoke warmly in praise of his military qualities. Napoleon had never before listened to flattery of this sort from a woman, and the effect on him was electric. He described the incident in a letter to Joseph in these words: "Her praise intoxicated me. From that moment I confided my conversation to her and never left her side. I was passionately in love with her and our friends were aware of it long before I ever dared to say a word about it."

Barras was highly gratified at the success of this introduction and looked for an opportunity to bring the name of his new friend in front of the public. He had not long to wait. Later in the year trouble broke out in Paris when there was a clash between the mob and the National Guard. A meeting of the Convention was hastily summoned for the purpose of appointing a military leader to deal with the situation. Barras spoke his mind with great forcefulness. "There is only one man in Paris to deal with our troubles, and that man is Napoleon Bonaparte."

Barras won the day, and Napoleon, who was present at the meeting, had the pleasure of hearing himself elected to the post. He accepted, but insisted on his command being independent with no interference from any politician. The Directory most unwillingly acceded to this request.

This was the first independent military command that Napoleon ever held, and on the following day he gave ample proof of his organising capability. A vast and angry mob of 40,000 men moved from a dozen different directions to a single converging point, which was the Palace of the Tuileries. The National Guard was ready to receive them, and the men were in position, standing or kneeling in sheltered places. All of a sudden there was a deafening cannonade of guns which poured shells and grapeshot into the advancing ranks of the insurgents. Instantly panic broke out among the latter, who took to flight, leaving the streets littered with dead and wounded. The battle was short, the triumph complete, and the people of Paris showered praise on the speed and efficiency which Barras had shown in quelling the mutiny. Napoleon, whose political sagacity was now developing, joined in the flattery which was being showered on the clever politician.

The battle of the Streets of Paris was only a passing trifle, and yet it was useful in that it afforded an opportunity for Napoleon to study the actions of the junior artillery officers under his own command. One of them in particular had distinguished himself. His name was Joachim Murat, and he was destined to play a major part in the new French Empire.

Having gained his first success in battle, Napoleon turned his thoughts to love and the liaison with Josephine began to deepen. It was an unusual kind of romance. He was twenty-six while she was thirty-three, and well aware that her physical attractions were on the decline. But the adoration of her lover was so warm and his protestations so sincere, that she finally consented to take him to the office of M. Raguideaux, her confidential notary and solicitor. At that inter-

view the legal man made a statement which French historians delight in repeating.

"He may be a good officer, but he has nothing but his sword and his cloak. As a confidential friend who has your interest at heart, I feel in duty bound to warn you against this man. My conscience would not permit me to do otherwise."

Josephine was not listening to him, for, as she often admitted, her thoughts were far away. She remembered how, as a child in the West Indies, she had been told by a fortune-teller that she would become a queen, provided that she crossed the ocean. She had left her home and come to France, but up to this time she had never met anybody, rich or poor, who had the smallest claim to regality. As she listened to the old man's criticisms of her latest lover, it occurred to her to combine the words of the fortune-teller with the ardour of Napoleon. She decided to accept him.

Napoleon had been listening at the keyhole while this interview was taking place, and was overjoyed at the result. But that evening, when he returned home, he found a letter waiting for him, a letter which brought a frown to his face. He knew the handwriting and could guess the contents, and could not help thinking that such a letter was exceedingly inopportune. Finally, when he did open it he read the simple words of the simple passion of a simple girl:—

You know how much I love you, but never shall I be able to tell you how I feel. Absence and separation will never alter the feelings you inspire in me. In a word, my whole life belongs to you.

Write to me as soon as you can to assure me of your affections. Our hearts are too closely joined to separate from one another. Inform me of your health. You were not well, when you parted from me.

Oh, my dear friend, take care of your life, preserve it for your own Desirée, who cannot live without you. Give me your promise to love me always just as I give you mine.

Napoleon was always reticent about his private life, his only confidant being his eldest brother. It is impossible to say whether he answered this letter or not. But at about this time he wrote to Joseph, and though the actual meaning of his words is obscure, yet they tend to show a certain measure of self-criticism in his behaviour to Desirée.

If I remain here, it is not impossible that an urge for marriage may seize me. Send me a line about this. Perhaps it would be well if you spoke to Desirée's brother on the subject. Let me know the result. That is all that matters.

There is no doubt that the young dreamer saw, in the advent of 1796, the approach of his own star, his Destiny. In the early weeks of that year he was called to a special interview with the supreme War Council. There he learned to his great surprise and pleasure that the plans that he had previously forwarded for the Invasion of Italy had not been pigeon-holed and dumped on a rubbish-heap, as he had led himself to believe. On the contrary, they had been studied with the most careful scrutiny and were found to be feasible. The Council had adopted them and ordered General Secher, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Italy, to put them in action forthwith.

On hearing these words the young general jumped up and protested. He acclaimed that it was his plan and that he should be the one chosen to put it into operation. The Council listened to him and decided to

place the matter in the hands of a Selection Board. This Board, when convened, turned out to consist of five members. Two of those five were Barras and Carnot—both of them friends of Napoleon.

By the beginning of March he was officially informed that his great opportunity had come. He married Josephine on the 9th of that month, after which he left Paris and repaired to Nice, where his army awaited him. Once again he beheld the waters of the blue Mediterranean, and the sight seemed to electrify him. It reminded him of the days of poverty and want, silence and despair, but those days were now gone, never to return. In front of him were rich lands to be obtained by battle and glory, while behind him was the woman he adored with every fibre of his being.

His heart was filled with joy and his cheeks glowed with pleasure as he prepared to enter on his first command. His marriage, his appointment and his departure had all taken place within forty-eight hours. That was the pace, according to his views, at which everything in the world ought to move. And now it had all happened, just as he had wished. Only one incident occurred which for a fleeting moment might have damped his buoyancy. On the day he struck camp a letter was handed to him.

You have made me utterly miserable, and yet I am weak enough to forgive you. Now you are married, unhappy Desirée is no more permitted to love and think of you. My only comfort is to know that you are convinced of my constancy to you. I wish only for death. My life henceforth will be an appalling torment, seeing that I can no longer devote it to your service. Never, never shall I be the bride of another.

Of course, we do not know the effects inspired by these heart-rending words on the young Commander-in-Chief. He may have laughed at them, he may have scorned to read them. What we do know, however, is that this little note was not destroyed, but was kept, soiled and intact, for many years after the death of both the writer and the recipient.

CHAPTER V

FROM OBSCURITY TO FAME

"THIS was the happiest time of my whole life. Oh, the rapture of it. Oh, what glamour, oh what enthusiasm! I seemed to have been lifted in the air, high above all other mortals. When I looked down the world was descending under my feet."

In such phrases Napoleon liked to describe his first and his most brilliant campaign. In the eighteen months that followed his departure from Nice he emitted a series of sparks which ignited France, stunned England and electrified Europe and brought terror to Italy, Austria and Prussia. The story of the Italian Campaign is rightly considered to be an important chapter in the progress of military science. It is one of those few campaigns that can be easily read and understood alike by civilian and professional soldier. We prefer to give it in the words of the Commander-in-Chief.

He introduced himself to his new army in a Special Order :—

Soldiers, you are half starved and half naked. The Government owes you much but can do nothing for you. Your patience and

courage do you honour but they procure you neither advantage or glory.

I am about to lead you into the most fertile valleys in the world. There you will find flourishing cities and teeming provinces. There you will reap honour, glory and riches.

Soldiers of the Army of Italy, will you lack courage ?

The soldiers read these words with mixed feelings. It was certainly true that they were half-starved, half-naked and had not seen any pay for months ; that they were lousy, discontented and inclined to mutiny. But this Order of the Day was something the like of which they had never seen before and seemed to indicate that there was somebody at any rate who was interested in their welfare. In particular they liked the last word of the second paragraph.

The three old generals—old, that is, from the Napoleonic standpoint—held widely different views on this literary effusion. Their names were Augereau, Berthier, and Massena. Augereau did not like it because it was undignified and therefore contrary to the precepts of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Berthier also disapproved of it simply and solely on the grounds that in all his long military career he had never seen anything of the sort before. Massena thought it was quite good : he read it over several times and each time he liked it better.

The enemy consisted of Northern Italians, who were under the command of a seventy-one year old Austrian General named Boileau, who held a strong position in the centre of his forces, with Lombardian soldiers well strung out on either side. He did not fail to notice the growing strength of his opponents, and decided to take the initiative by attacking first. But it was an old-fashioned and half-hearted attack that did no harm to anybody. It had lasted two whole days, after which Napoleon counter-attacked with a vicious assault on the Italian centre, which was driven far enough to disconnect it with its left flank. Quick as a flash, Napoleon turned on the wavering flank and completely destroyed it.

Three more battles were fought and won in similar vein, and then came a resounding victory at Charasco, so complete that the Italians suggested an armistice and parley. They wanted to meet the young conqueror in order to bargain with him. Napoleon, however, merely stood up and made an announcement, "Gentlemen, I would have you know that my next attack is fixed for to-morrow afternoon at two o'clock. Unless I can be certain of my initial objectives being in my hands before daybreak the attack will not be postponed but will take place at an earlier time."

They acceded to his terms, and he promptly wrote to the Directory, demanding the back pay owing to his troops. At the same time he informed them that the whole of the Nice and Savoy area was in French hands. In their reply, the Directory make it clear that they resented the demand for the money for the soldiers' pay. They were, however, apparently persuaded to change their minds, for a few days later the money was despatched. On its arrival another Order of the Day was issued :—

Soldiers, in fourteen days you have fought six battles. You have taken twenty-one standards, fifty-five guns and several fortresses. You have conquered the richest territory in Piedmont. You have to your credit 15,000 prisoners and more than 10,000 dead and wounded.

Hitherto you have fought for the possession of cold rocks which, through your renown, will be made famous for all times. But they are of little value to your country. To-day your services have placed you on a level with the troops in Holland and the Army of the Rhine. When the campaign began, you were destitute of everything. Now you have plenty and to spare.

He despatched to the Treasury two million francs and quantities of art treasures, including the famous *Giaconda* of Leonardo, and then turned his attention towards an Italian General named Colli, whose army he attacked most viciously. The surrender of Colli and his army took place a few days later, and was followed by another Order of the Day :—

Soldiers, your country is entitled to expect great things from you. Will you justify their expectation? Your greatest obstacles are already overcome, but you have many battles to fight, many towns to capture, many rivers to cross. Is there a single one of you whose courage fails him?

No. Not one among the victors of Montenotte, Millisimo, Mondavi and Dago. You are all inspired with the ambition to spread the fame of the French nation throughout the world. The desire of every one of you is to humble those proud rulers who would put us in chains and fetters. You all, when you return to your homes, will be proud to say "I was with the victorious Army of Italy."

To this the soldiers replied by presenting more and greater victories to their young chief. On the 1st of June, Napoleon wrote again to the Directory: "Another two million are on the way. To-morrow I shall despatch three hundred carriage horses from Milan. They will replace the miserable creatures that are drawing your carriages at present."

The Chiefs of the Directory were delighted to receive this welcome gift, far more welcomed by them than the art-pictures. There followed, of course, a great deal of noisome acrimony as to how the carriage horses were to be partitioned, but any feelings of rancour or disappointment were quickly dispelled by the magnificence of the gift of ready money. Two million francs! It was pointed out that this was a larger sum than they had despatched previously for the soldiers' pay! Was not this definite proof that they were statesmen of high order who were quick to recognise and take advantage of a profitable investment?

The same courier who bore this message to the Directory, brought a letter to Joseph which filled that young man with alarm. "I am distracted to hear my wife is ill. I no longer know where I am, and terrible forebodings trouble my breast. I entreat you to bestow every care upon her. Besides myself, you are the only person in the world who takes an interest in my Josephine. I must see her, press her to my bosom, for I am madly in love with her and cannot live without her. Oh, my brother, do not let the courier stay in Paris above six hours, but send him back with an answer that will inspire me with new life. Farewell, my friend, all happiness be with you. I am compelled by Nature to gain nothing but empty trifles."

Joseph had heard nothing at all about his sister-in-law being ill, but in obedience to his brother's wishes, he paid a visit to the lady. She was not ill at all, neither was she in the very least concerned about her husband. On the contrary, she was quite well and her many cavaliers were providing her with both pleasure and amusement.

Before Joseph had time to reply, the news reached Paris that the

Vatican had surrendered. Conditions of peace had been proposed and had been accepted, and the terms were enough to bring a gasp of astonishment to the whole of Europe. By this agreement, the Vatican consented to pay thirty million francs to the French Government : to close all its ports against the English navies : and to surrender a thousand choice works of art to the Republican Armies. The payment of the huge sum was highly welcome to Barras and his brethren, and the acquisition of works of art was appreciated by the people of Paris. But it was the mention of England, the closing of ports to the English navy that set all the tongues wagging in Europe. What would England do ? How would she take it ? An answer to that question is quoted. It was written by a sea captain in the Royal Navy and addressed from the Gulf of Genoa : "We English regret that we cannot always decide the fate of the Empire on the sea. I very much believe that England who, at the commencement of this war, had all Europe for her Allies, will finish it by having nearly all Europe as her enemies." The name of the writer of that letter was Horatio Nelson.

Napoleon refused to allow any pause or respect, but pushed on and on, regardless of other people's feelings or desires. A few weeks later he was in possession of Milan, where he blazoned forth a proclamation to the inhabitants :—

Citizens of Milan, you are about to regain your freedom and secure greater advantages than the French themselves. Your State has five million inhabitants, and Milan should be its capital. You shall have five hundred cannon and the friendship of France.

I shall choose fifty from your midst who shall govern the State in the name of France. Adopt our laws and accommodate yourselves to our customs. Remain united and all will be well with you. That is my will. Should Austria again seek to master Lombardy, I swear to you that I am on your side and will never forget you.

A more modern state would perhaps have been suspicious about that order to "choose fifty from your midst." But the Milanese of those days had heard nothing about quislings—at least, not until it was too late. Indeed, it can be said that the Italian campaign was an excellent example of blitzkrieg in the pre-mechanical days. But, as was the case with all its imitators, this war found it quite impossible to maintain the pace of its start. Nearly all the events described took place within the month of June, 1796, by which time Napoleon had advanced over half way across Northern Italy. But here he paused, and from that time till the end of the year there was no forward movement of any importance at all.

The reason was, of course, that he was badly in need of fresh equipment and reinforcements. It must be concluded that his appeals to the Directory had been in vain. Certainly by the beginning of 1797 his attitude towards them had completely changed and become short and peremptory, like orders issued to a junior. "You shall send me at once 10,000 men from the Rhine, 10,000 from the seacoast, and 1,500 cavalry. In return for these you shall have millions of money, overwhelming victories, and an advantageous peace. As to generals of divisions, I insist that you send me none but distinguished officers, for our methods of warfare are different from all others. I cannot trust a division to any general until I have tried him in two or three engagements."

The Directory read the instructions with great care and, after a

long delay, issued orders that the best division of the Army of the Rhine should be recalled with the object of being transferred to the Army of Italy. The selected division had been fighting on the Rhine for a long period, and the leave of its men was considerably overdue. They had before them a march of no less than 600 miles from Coblenz to Mantua, involving many difficult obstacles, including the passage across the Alps. On their route they had also to march through their own country, passing their own homes, thereby offering numerous opportunities for leave-taking and desertion.

But the selected division appears to have been unique in the French Army as far as discipline was concerned. Not only did they accomplish their goal with the precision of a peace-time route march, but they succeeded in gaining universal praise all along the way for their soldierly bearing and magnificent spirit. They crossed the Alps in the depth of winter, accomplishing the ascent in six hours and the descent in only four. Eventually they reached their destination and joined up with the Army of Italy, which gave them a reception that was far from being enthusiastic.

"So this is the Army of the New Republic. Fancy sending men like these to Italy ! Pity to see their boots soiled !"

"They may be all right on the barrack square, but how on earth will such men stand up to powder and shot ?"

"They will not stand up to it at all. Look at them. They are just drawing-room soldiers. That's what they are."

There were many remarks in this vein as the reinforcements marched into the camp of the Commander-in-Chief. The coarse-mouthed and bearded old-timers openly jeered and sneered as the immaculate army passed through their camp. The newcomers were exposed to bitter scorn and vulgar jest. But it was noticed that the language was modified when it was realised that their General was approaching. And when he came, they saw him riding at a slow walk, followed by the officers of his staff. They watched him draw nearer and nearer, and unconsciously found themselves on their feet and standing to attention. Like his soldiers, this General was immaculate. His military cloak was thrown lightly and carelessly over his shoulders. His cocked hat covered his brow. He was tall, his eyes shone with a glowing lustre, and he had an unusually large nose.

Yes, indeed, we have met him before ! It was Desirée's tall sergeant, now eight years older and considerably transformed. But this time he was not seeking a billet at a private house. This time it was something different. This time he was on his way to the first meeting with Bonaparte.

He approached a tent that was set apart from the rest, and dismounted. As he did so, the flaps were drawn back, and there, in front of him, was the young man whose exploits were the talk of Europe. Bernadotte went up to him and saluted ; the other, with the slightest of gestures, motioned him inside the tent.

Once the two men were together, they glared at one another like a pair of cocks before a fight. Bernadotte had the advantage in height by at least six inches : Bernadotte was thirty-six, Napoleon twenty-seven : Bernadotte's uniform was clean, Napoleon's was soiled. Both had fighting reputations, and now for the first time they stood face to face, glaring at one another. It was a veritable battle of the eyes.

"I am ordered, my General," the voice of the newcomer was soft and musical, "to congratulate you on your recent successes——"

"You are a Gascon?"

"Yes, my General."

"Proceed."

"—and to inform you that I have brought ten thousand men to add lustre to the Army of Italy."

"I thank you, General," the voice was shrill and penetrating, "and on which front have you been fighting?"

"From the Army of the Rhine. We are sent by the War Council."

"Thcha. The French War Council! A lot of old hags and chattering beldames. Indeed, I guessed that they had sent you, for I am in doubt as to whether your men are here for fighting purposes or for attracting the smiles of the ladies."

The older man flushed at the insult and his eyes glowed with anger. But he checked the oncoming gasconnade, and replied in a voice that was restrained and polite:—

"We are here, my General, for the same purpose as yourself. Namely, the honour and glory of France."

Napoleon had not been prepared for this answer, and turned away. The battle of the eyes was over and Bernadotte had lasted out.

"Then in that case you will consider yourself under my orders. I shall be interested to see how these 'gentlemen' of yours will stand the heat of battle. You may depart now and work out your dispositions."

All fighting men, whether they be soldiers, sailors or airmen, have a certain instinct in common. They can sum up one another at sight, and their first impressions are nearly always correct. So it was after this short interview. Bonaparte told Berthier that Bernadotte was 'just an old sergeant . . . drilling recruits and taking names . . . patriotic, but far too narrow-minded—wholly unsuited as a general in the New Army.' But his written words were rather different. "I saw before me an officer with a Gascon head and a Roman heart." Similarly Bernadotte was not impressed. He had seen scores of young officers who were bumptious and obtrusive, and he had watched them being either made or marred by army life. His recorded words of that interview are just what might have been expected from him. "I saw before me a young man of about twenty-five who assumes the airs and importance of a general of fifty."

It was not long before Bernadotte was put to the test. Napoleon had disposed his army in four groups, in the shape of a crescent. The upper three were commanded by Augereau, Berthier and Massena, the lower one by himself. He used Bernadotte's Division as his own vanguard, and his first order to that general was to capture, either by seige or storm, a village called Grädisca. A couple of days later, Bernadotte was able to report that he had stormed the place and captured it at a price of eight hundred casualties. Napoleon replied tersely that the casualties were unnecessarily heavy.

In the following six months the campaign went smoothly and without special incident. Napoleon continued to emit flattering harangues to his troops and to fill the coffers of the Directory. He fought and won the Battle of Tagliamento, in which Bernadotte's division played an important part. By October, 1797, the war had been won, peace declared, and Napoleon issued his last Order of the Day:—

"Soldiers. All this is nothing compared to what you will be called on to achieve in the future."

On his return he received a tremendous ovation from the people of Paris. He was the hero of the hour, and no honour could be too great for him. The Directory, enriched with ready money and new carriage horses, and under the leadership of Barras, was particularly effusive. That evening Barras presided at a banquet in his honour, closing his speech with these words: "Go and humble the Giant Corsair that infests the seas. Go forth to London and deliver justice to this nation. Punish them for those outrages that have been far too long left unpunished."

With these words Napoleon was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army of England, and repaired to Dunkirk, where he remained for a very short stay. He was singularly silent, his only published remark being "From henceforth Antwerp will be a loaded pistol, pointing to the breast of England."

Immediately afterwards he returned to Paris and made his report to the Directory. "There is nothing to be done in the north at present. Our Army of England must become the Army of the East, with its population of six million people. That is the place where great Revolutions must be started and great Empires founded."

CHAPTER VI

ANOTHER WAR AND ANOTHER ENGAGEMENT

THE Italian campaign had been so brilliant, so masterly and so unexpected that by the end of it both the Bonaparte and Clary families had been thrown into dismay. The eldest Bonaparte daughter, Elisa, had become married to a fiddler: both Louis and Lucien were on military duty, but not in Italy: Pauline was still flirting: Caroline and Jerome were at school. Joseph and Julie had left Marseilles and had bought a house in the Rue de Roche, Paris, where they took up residence. After a while they were joined by Desirée.

On his return from Italy, Napoleon gave orders that his family should leave Marseilles forthwith and come to Paris. He had very strong views on this point. To him Marseilles was a town of poverty and garrets, smoke and stench, revolutionary mobs and jeering urchins. Now that his family were about to become the new aristocracy of France, it was essential that their life in Marseilles should be completely forgotten. Under no circumstances were they ever to admit that they were even acquainted with the place.

And Desirée! What of her?

There are, of course, thousands of examples in history, fiction, and indeed in everyday life, where engagements have been broken off and marriage dreams shattered through the cold-blooded cruelty or indifference of the other side. But surely the rupture of Desirée's engagement is unique in the annals of romance. In most cases the injured party can derive consolation from friends and relations and, in modern times, solicitors who find it a most lucrative business. But there was no consolation of that sort for Desirée. Her chief acquaintances at this time were the Bonaparte family, while her only near relations were her mother and sister. Whatever sympathy they may have felt for this girl was quickly dispersed in the colossal wave of exultation that swept over France caused by the brilliant

victor of the Italian campaign. Joseph never ceased to expound his brother's genius, and gradually Julie began to think in line with him. But they both observed with deep concern the awful grief of this sensitive child, as well as the bitter self-denunciation which showed itself in such words as "Oh ! What a fool I have been. Oh ! What a fool."

It was only natural that Joseph and Julie both made up their minds to find a suitable mate for Desirée. Fortune helped them, for, in the closing days of the Italian campaign, Joseph was appointed French Ambassador at Genoa, whither he repaired, accompanied by Julie, Desirée and a military attaché named Duphot. The latter was a young man of handsome appearance and good family : he had, moreover, fought in the divisions of both Bernadotte and Murat in the Italian campaign. It was not long before Duphot did just exactly what Julie and Joseph wanted him to do, and that was to pay court to Desirée.

Joseph was in many respects a good diplomat, but there were occasions when he committed acts of great folly. Shortly after the peace with Italy had been signed, a large body of local inhabitants proceeded to the Embassy in order to present a petition. Joseph did not like the look of these people and ordered them to go away. They refused to do so, and Joseph sent for some French soldiers who received orders to "settle the dispute." This they did by firing some live rounds into the mob, after which a battle commenced outside the Embassy. Young Duphot insisted on joining the fray and rushed out into the open. He was met with a burst of gunfire, after which his wounded and bleeding body was carried into the hall, where he died a few minutes later. There is no doubt that he was a definite suitor, though Desirée refused to regard him as a lover, and always claimed that she had no interest in him at all.

At this point two young men appear for the first time in this story ; their names were Junot and Marmont. These two men were artillery subalterns at Toulon Harbour, and had become ardent admirers of Napoleon. He liked them, too, and on one or two occasions had brought them to Marseilles. They had enhanced their reputations—and also their pockets—in the Italian campaign, and both were marked out for rapid promotion and high honours. Of these two men Junot had a bad reputation with women of all sorts, but in spite of that Napoleon was always telling him to marry a rich girl. He therefore decided to pay serious attention to Desirée, whom he had already met in Marseilles. But the difficulty of courtship was that he had been sent to Paris while she was in Genoa. He decided that he would court Desirée by proxy.

Junot arranged that his friend, Marmont, who happened to be stationed in the neighbourhood of Genoa should repair to Joseph's house and plead with Desirée on his behalf. Marmont gladly agreed, and after a while succeeded in approaching Desirée. He painted a magnificent, albeit not very accurate picture of his friend's virtues. He extolled in particular the military achievements of Junot, and waxed so eloquent that Desirée was really amused. At the same time she was most emphatic in her refusal.

"You seem to forget that I come from Marseilles, and am already acquainted with the moral character of General Junot—too well acquainted, perhaps." But she afterwards admitted that she was impressed by the genuine appeal and military bearing of Marmont, and would have been inclined to listen with much greater sympathy if he had been speaking for himself.

All this was taking place at the end of 1797, when Desirée was

just sixteen years old : that is, the age when she was to have married either Joseph or Napoleon. When she returned to Paris at the beginning of 1798 she found herself being approached from all sides by different army officers who obviously aspired to closer relationship with the Bonaparte family. She spent a great deal of time writing letters refusing requests to meet them in either public or private places.

She was for a long time terrified at the thought of meeting Napoleon, but when she did, his manner towards her was particularly affable, and he discoursed with alarming candour on all the young officers whom she ought to marry. Desirée watched him without listening to a word he said. This was the man who had spurned the love of a young girl who worshipped him and had been entrapped by an old woman who despised him. In that moment the man whom she had once wanted as her master became contemptible in her eyes, and so also did the names of the men whom he was pushing at her. She was probably the only woman in France who held him in disdain, and perhaps she wondered if there existed in France any man that shared her views.

Heaven hath no rage like love to anger turned,
Nor Hell such fury as a woman scorned.

It was not very long before once again there was talk of war. It was clear that Paris wanted something, but she had not the least idea what it was. She was tired of the Revolution : she did not want Bourbons but preferred victories, for they gave the people something to read and talk about ; and of course, victories with plenty of artistic loot added to them were very acceptable indeed. Bonaparte thought so, too, but Barras was not so sure. . . .

Barras was still the most powerful political personage in Paris. His energetic support of the appointment of Napoleon to the Army of Italy had tremendously enhanced his position in the Directory. But the treatment meted out to him by Napoleon after the final victory had made Barras the laughing-stock of his fellows. Napoleon completely ignored him—treated him as though he did not exist. Barras, quite naturally, was furious and voiced his views. "Had it not been for me, the Italian war would have been unfought, and the name of Bonaparte unknown. But he returned, bursting with glory, and had not a single word of gratitude to the man who had helped him in the time of his poverty and distress." And so it came about that Barras did just exactly what any other politician would have done—at any time and in any country. He looked about him and before long discovered a man, immaculate alike in character and appearance, who had a military reputation of great distinction, and had yet remained loyal to the cardinal principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. And the name of the man he had found, was Bernadotte.

Barras decided to give a party at his house with the object of introducing Bernadotte to some of the Republican politicians, and it was not long before the topic of conversation turned to the rumoured forthcoming invasion of Egypt.

"I do not blame Bonaparte for wanting to attack England," said Bernadotte, "for sooner or later, France must make a bid for sea power. But if he attacks Egypt, as apparently is his intention, I can see a possibility of his army being separated and cut off from its base by a powerful, hostile fleet. I have not the least doubt that our army can meet and conquer the English in straight battle. But without sea power his army might well be annihilated."

"But will England fight?" asked another. "She has lost her American Colonies in pitched battle. She always claimed to be the mother of that country, but just look at the way that she has allowed her own children to be treated. Since she lost that war, her property in America, which took years to acquire and develop, has been ruthlessly confiscated from her. And what has she done? She has not even uttered a word of protest."

"That is perfectly true," said another, "for I know that in the big American cities all Englishmen are being compelled to surrender everything they possess, even the shirts on their backs. In America, robbery and violence are not regarded as crimes, provided that they are committed against Englishmen. These people who boast that they rule the seas are being herded as slaves and driven like paupers, and all the time England remains complacent, powerless to protest. Surely that is proof that England will not fight. And if England suffered a heavy defeat on land, her soldiers would lay down their arms and it is reasonable to suppose that her sailors would do the same."

"You are forgetting, gentlemen," resumed Bernadotte, "that England is a very difficult country to defeat in war. I agree that her morale is lower to-day than it has ever been before. But I, personally, dislike the idea of sending this army to Egypt. I sincerely hope that my apprehensions will not be justified, but I must admit that they exist all the same. I consider it to be a very risky and hazardous undertaking."

Barras was watching closely the face of Bernadotte as he spoke these words, and then in subdued tones he put a direct question to him, "Am I to understand, my General, that you are ready to defy this man? This Bonaparte?"

Bernadotte's eyes were flashing. "My sword and my body are both at the disposal of all who oppose tyranny and slavery."

"In that case, General Bernadotte, you ought to be War Minister."

This conversation, though conducted in privacy, nevertheless reached the ears of Joseph, Julie and Desirée. The latter did not claim to understand politics, but she, too, was interested in a vague sort of way: she thought that she had heard the name of Bernadotte before.

It seems incredible that such a talk could ever have taken place among seriously-minded people. For an invading army to attack an enemy across an open sea avenue without command of that sea, would seem to us to be the height of insanity. But the whole French nation, whether Royalist, Jacobin or Imperialist, thought that such an expedition was not merely feasible but would certainly be accompanied by a reasonable measure of success. It seems strange, but it was so.

Bernadotte repeated his ideas at a meeting of the War Council, but was laughed to scorn, and told that "caution never won battles." And so it came about that the Army of Egypt was put into commission, and in the spring of 1798 Napoleon boarded the Orient with the object of striking a blow at the heart of the British Empire. A watchful English fleet, under the command of Nelson, tried its best to intercept him, but was thwarted by ill fortune and unfavourable winds. Napoleon merely laughed at the danger to his invasion fleet, and showed his scorn by halting in transit for the purpose of seizing and annexing the island of Malta. After that, he proceeded to Alexandria.

And now we see him again, his slender figure silhouetted on the sandy desert beneath the Great Pyramid: a very different setting to

that provided by the Italian Alps. With him were Berthier, Marmont, Junot, Murat : notable absentees included Augereau, Massena, and Bernadotte. Once again the Order of the Day was issued. Once again the feelings of the troops were lashed to ardour as they read the words, written by one soldier to another :—

Soldiers, from the height of these pyramids, forty centuries look down on you. You are about to undertake a conquest whose influence on the culture and civilisation of the world will be of incalculable importance. You are about to inflict upon England the most significant and grievous wound that she will ever have sustained, before you finally deal her the finishing blow.

The people in whose midst we shall find ourselves are Mahomedan. Their first act of faith is "God is God and Mahommed is his prophet." Do not contradict their assertions. Treat them as you treated the Jews and Italians. Show respect to their Muftis and Imams as you have done to priests and rabbis.

Pillage enriches only a small number of soldiers : it dishonours us, destroys our means of support and makes enemies of the people with whom in our interests we should be friends. The people whom we are visiting handle their women differently from ourselves. But in every country the man who offers violence to a woman is a monster.

He captured Alexandria on the 2nd of July, and a few days later fought and conquered the Mamelukes at the Battle of the Pyramids. He then annexed Cairo where he halted. The country was under the rule of the Turks, and the invaders had to seek water from sandy holes, many of which had been plugged up and rendered useless. The heat was intense, and the soldiers drew many uncomplimentary comparisons between the fertile plains of Lombardy and the naked, burning sands of the desert. Not only did they suffer from thirst, but there were in addition all the discomforts brought about by lice and rats. The Battle of the Pyramids turned out to be the only relaxation in the whole campaign. In that battle they had the pleasure of shooting down some 20,000 Egyptians in an orgy of massacre and bloodshed, while the French casualties barely reached double figures.

While Napoleon was sitting in Cairo, matters of political importance began to take place on the continent of Europe. Indeed, at the very moment when his back was turned, the whole of central Europe showed signs of military activity, resulting from the Italian campaign. The trouble started in Vienna, and centred round the person of the French Ambassador, who had dared to fly the ultra-Communitic flag of the Tricolor from his roof. The Viennese protested without avail, then demonstrated, and finally the incident ended in street fighting and bloodshed. The French Ambassador, who turned out to be none other than Bernadotte, was instantly recalled to Paris, where he was highly complimented on the part that he had taken.

After being exonerated, Bernadotte, in the uniform of a general, rode through the streets of Paris, where he was observed by Desirée, who happened to be on a balcony with Joseph at her side. She remarked on his handsome appearance, and Joseph replied that the general was one of his oldest friends and that he intended to invite him to his house in the Rue de Roche.

A few days later the soldier-diplomat presented himself at the house of Joseph and found himself face to face with Desirée. When introduced to her, he bowed low and kissed her hand.

"May I ask, Mademoiselle Clary, what is your first name?"

"Certainly, Monsieur. I am called Desirée."

"But your intimate friends call you Eugénie, and I have the honour to be in that circle."

"Please, I don't understand."

He was looking down at her, a happy smile on his face. And as for her, she was flushing, for this remark had taken her completely by surprise. And then, to the amazement of the assembled company, he described how he had once visited her house, how he had talked to two dear little girls, how he had been expelled for the crime of not being a commissioned officer. Joseph roared with laughter: Julie had remembered every detail of that distant day: but Desirée could only giggle and mutter, "Oh, General, I must have been a very small child when it all happened."

It was an exceedingly happy party, particularly for Julie, who quickly detected the possibilities of a forthcoming romance. Indeed, it seemed to be all wit and laughter on that July afternoon. Desirée, who had suffered for months from a morbid depression, became her own natural self again. Bernadotte chided her for stealing his pay-book, the loss of which, he said, was a court-martial offence. Desirée replied that she still had it and intended to keep it, for it was one of her few souvenirs of Marseilles.

And now the fits of depression that Desirée had been suffering gave place to periods of restlessness and perplexity. This was hardly surprising when one considers the vicissitudes and speed of her romances. At the age of eighteen she had had no less than five suitors: Joseph, Napoleon, Duphot, Junot, Marmont—and no marriage. The appearance of Bernadotte on the scene only seemed to make matters more complicated than they were before. She decided to take her problems to her mother.

"Oh, maman, I seem to be surrounded by soldiers who say they want to marry me. It is my misfortune that I have to choose among so many. There was Junot who is a great friend of Napoleon, and who will, they say, some day be a Marshal of France. He wrote me a letter which was brought to me in Genoa by Marmont. Of those two, I prefer Marmont."

"Is there nobody else?"

"Yes. There is Bernadotte. He is the man that asked for a billet in our house just before the Revolution."

"Well."

"I think he would like to marry me; but, maman, he is old enough to be my father."

"He is a general, a diplomat, and will probably one day be Chief of the War Council."

"That is true. But Napoleon——"

"Why are you always talking about Napoleon? You certainly cannot marry him. He is already married."

"I was going to say that Napoleon does not like Bernadotte."

"What does that matter? Bernadotte likes you."

"Yes. I know that. I think he is in love with me."

"Bernadotte is the best of the lot. There is a stability about him that none of the others possess, not even Napoleon. Take Bernadotte, my child, and marry him if you can. If you want to marry a soldier, choose one that is upright and one that will keep his job. Not many soldiers are capable of maintaining both those virtues."

Those words were decisive. Bernadotte and Desirée were engaged.

CHAPTER VII

THE OBSTACLE MAN

JEAN BAPTISTE BERNADOTTE was the son of a lawyer, and was born at Pau in 1763, which means that he was about eighteen years older than Desirée. Like all Gascons he had a fiery nature and a natural gift of eloquence, a brisk and vivid imagination and a keen and somewhat exaggerated sense of honour and duty.

His father died in 1780, and young Jean promptly enlisted in the Royal-la-Marine with the fixed intention of becoming a distinguished general on the battlefield, and thereby leading France to the dizzy heights of glory to which he considered her to be entitled. He was, however, soon to learn, like many another soldier, that the path to military glory is slow and fraught with disappointments, especially as it was under the reign of Louis XVI. His quick temper and mercurial nature were distinct handicaps to his advancement, and he had completed five years' service before he became a full corporal.

From that time onwards he resolved to suppress his emotions, curb his temper and devote himself to the monotonous routine of military life. This repression was exceptionally difficult for a man of his nature, but it was certainly successful, for, as we have seen in his visit to Marseilles in 1789, he had reached the rank of Sergeant-major at the comparatively early age of twenty-six. In the following year he became Adjutant, thereby attaining the highest regimental rank for non-commissioned officers.

In the ordinary course Bernadotte's military career should have finished at this point, for he was barred from any further promotion through the iniquitous law that "no man who does not possess four quarters of nobility shall ever rise above the rank of Captain and Adjutant." But the Revolution stepped in at a most propitious moment, preserved him like a miracle, and enabled his cherished dreams to pass into reality.

The fever of revolt rapidly spread from the people and permeated the ranks of the army. Eventually the Royal-la-Marine caught the infection, and one day, when assembled in a church, the non-commissioned officers staged a revolution on their own and made it known that they were discontented with their officers and wished the Adjutant to take command of the Regiment. Bernadotte immediately jumped up and leapt into the pulpit, where he let off a gasconnade in which he made it clear that he would take command only on condition that every individual soldier would pledge himself to assist in the maintenance of duty and discipline.

The incident was reported to the authorities, and as a result Bernadotte left the Royal-la-Marine and joined the 36th Infantry Regiment as a Lieutenant with a regular commission. He now saw active service for the first time under the immediate command of Vicomte Beauharnais, who had a most unfortunate campaign, lost prestige, was recalled to Paris and put to death by guillotine. Nobody at the time would ever have guessed that this man's widow was later to become Empress of France, and his great grand-daughter the wife of Bernadotte's own son.

The year 1794 was almost as eventful for Bernadotte as it was for the Bonaparte and Clary families. He became Colonel and was given command of a half-brigade in the Army of the Sambre and Meuse. Here the French force met with disaster and was compelled to retreat, Bernadotte fighting a brilliant rearguard action. As a result he was promoted to the rank of General in this army.

The next campaign was not very successful from the French point of view. On three different occasions their armies invaded Germany, and each time were forced to withdraw. To Bernadotte was given the task of leading the van in attack and the rearguard in retreat. In both these exceedingly difficult forms of fighting he proved an outstanding success. The following passage was written by Barras:—

Bernadotte conducted the Teining retreat with great skill, daring and resource. He drew upon himself for that resourcefulness which some day, when worked on a larger scale, will reveal to Europe one of its greatest generals. Many observers, both foreign and French, have noticed that there is something of Xenophon in Bernadotte.

From the above it will be seen that Bernadotte's military reputation was known throughout the whole of France, and the question put to him by Napoleon at their first interview as to which front he had come from, was a deliberate insult. Napoleon was well aware of Bernadotte's successes, and it pleased him to pretend that they were of no consequence. He had received a shock when he heard that Bernadotte was coming to him, for he instinctively saw a possible rival. But after a few weeks in the field Napoleon ceased to fear him. He saw in this flashy soldier a man who was jealous above all things of his military honour and stainless reputation. Napoleon decided to use this man for his own advancement.

Such was the story of Bernadotte, who now became Desirée's lover. His rise from the rank of sergeant in 1789 to that of War Minister in 1799 is probably the most rapid and the most spectacular in the whole history of soldiering. Desirée had first heard of him from the conversation quoted in the previous chapter, in which he had questioned the prudence of the invasion of Egypt. The others had all reproached him bitterly for holding this view, but Desirée alone supported him, and said he must be right.

The truth is that Desirée was still suffering from the effects of her first love affair. The fact that her faithless lover, after the most shameless desertion and disavowal of his promises, should immediately afterwards become the god of his country and the lion of Europe, seemed to show that Fate and Destiny were very unjust. Her emotions alternated between rage, despair and revenge. She endured fits of rage which disappeared, but were followed by other spasms of despair, even to the verge of suicide. The meeting with Bernadotte seems to have restored her balance. To her he personified the spirit of revenge, bringing a shaft of light and hope to the darkness and gloom of her tender nature. And it came about that one evening in the gardens of Luxemburg, she sat and spoke with her newest lover.

"Do you remember, Desirée, that day when I, as a Marine sergeant, presented myself at your house in Marseilles?"

"Yes, I think I do."

"On that day I told you that we would meet again, for I had made up my mind that you were going to be my wife. I know that I am many years older than you, but I ask you to believe me when I tell

you that the greatness of my life lies in front of me and not behind me. I ask you to marry me, Desirée, for I am an honest and sincere fellow with high principles and the determination to live up to them. That cannot be said of any of the other rulers of our New France."

"Do you see that star?"

Bernadotte, greatly surprised, followed her gaze, and beheld the same heavens that had been seen by this girl before. But the central star was now far larger and brighter, and the satellites more numerous. "That star is a friend of mine. I watch it always, and it grows brighter every night . . . I love that star."

"There is no harm in your loving a star. Worship it, if you wish, but only promise that you will be my wife."

"You mean that if I marry you, I can still continue to love, or to hate my own star. You will not be jealous!"

"Jealous of a star! Of course not. Now, why on earth should I be jealous of a star?"

At these words she smiled, pressed her cheek to his lips and buried her head on his breast. A few days later the following document, framed in the curious wording of the eighteenth century, was drawn up and sworn:—

To-day, the 30th Thermidor, in the sixth year of the French Republic (1798) at 7 o'clock in the evening, there appeared before me, Etienne Bouvet, municipal agent of Sceaux, the following persons.

Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, aged thirty-five years, Divisional General of the Army of the Republic, now residing in this district, and Bernardine Eugénie Desirée Clary, aged eighteen years, youngest daughter of the late François Clary, merchant of Marseilles, and of Françoise Rose Clary, now residing at Genoa.

The said bride and bridegroom were accompanied by August Morin, aged twenty-six years, Captain in the 10th Regiment of Chasseurs; François Desgranges, notary public; Joseph Bonaparte, aged thirty years, member of the Council of Five Hundred, who was furnished with full powers to act for Françoise Rose Clary; Justicienne Victor Sonis, aged fifty years, landed proprietor; Lucien Bonaparte, Member of the Council of Five Hundred, residing with his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, at Paris, in the Rue de Roche.

The date of this document, translated into English, reads as the 16th of August, 1798.

Thus Desirée was married and became Madame Bernadotte. The bridal couple did not partake of a honeymoon, but went straight back to Joseph's house, and it was at this time that the following rather lively description of Desirée was written and published afterwards in the *Memoirs of Madame Junot*. "She was altogether an agreeable person. She was fond of her husband which was natural enough, but that fondness became a downright annoyance to the poor Gascon who, having nothing of a halo of romance in his composition, was often extremely perplexed by the part. She was continually in tears: when he had gone out because he was absent, when he was going out more tears, and when he came home she wept because he might have to go out again, perhaps in a week, but at any rate he would certainly have to go."

(After reading the above, the reader might perhaps like to pause and reflect on the sort of life that Desirée would have had if she had

married Napoleon and lived with him on the country estate near Marseilles.)

And here is an account authorised by the Queen of Sweden, many years later. "It was in the summer of 1798 that General Bernadotte, the new War Minister and already a close friend of Joseph Bonaparte and my sister, asked me to marry him. I hardly knew him! But he was different to my other suitors and I decided to accept him when they told me that he was the only man to stand up against Napoleon (*qu'il était homme à tenir tête à Napoleon*)."

Desirée here can be forgiven for the inaccuracy in the above statement that Bernadotte was War Minister. He did not get that appointment till fully a year later.

Bernadotte was granted a couple of months' leave after his marriage—a very liberal gratuity considering that in those days such a thing as marriage leave was unheard of. Those two months enabled him to learn a great deal about the intricacies that pervaded the Bonaparte-cum-Clary household. He was, of course, already acquainted with Joseph and Julie, but Lucien and Christine were new to him. A modern reader might think that three young married couples, all living under the same roof, would have found something to fight about, but that was not the case—in fact, they all lived in an atmosphere of complete harmony. For some reason Desirée had become friendly with Pauline, the sauciest of all the Bonaparte sisters. This may have been due to the proximity of the dates of their marriages, for Pauline had become Madame Leclerc in the same week that Desirée became Madame Bernadotte. He also learned that in the family circle Desirée was always Eugénie, Pauline was always Polette, and that sister Caroline was known by the terrifying name of Annunciata.

Bernadotte found them all very friendly and affable—a fact that gave him both surprise and pleasure. His only previous contact with a Bonaparte had been in an Italian camp, and the experience had filled him with repugnance and bitterness against anybody who bore the name. He always remarked that it was most fortunate for them all that at this time Napoleon was stewing in Egypt and therefore not in a position to meddle and muddle with their domestic harmony.

But though it was true that the crocodile was sunning himself on the banks of the Nile, yet the influence of the beast still permeated the home in the Rue de Roche. The bulletins and messages from the East came direct to Joseph. They were for the most part satisfactory, and of course they were always studied in detail. One of these letters addressed to Joseph by Napoleon is to-day on exhibit among the Historical Manuscripts in the British Museum. It is a curious letter in that it was obviously written at a time when its author was in a state of ultra-depression: it might, in fact, have been written by a man who was contemplating suicide.

Everything seemed to be going quite well till one afternoon when a despatch arrived which laid a pall of gloom over the assembled company, and provided Bernadotte with the most undesirable wedding present that could possibly be imagined.

The despatch arrived within a week of his wedding-day, and the whole company were assembled in the common room when Joseph read out the fateful message. Briefly it stated that the French fleet had been attacked by Nelson while lying at anchor in Aboukir Bay. The battle had started in the late afternoon and lasted through the night of August the 1st. The French fleet had been completely destroyed,

and the flagship *Orient*, the pride of the French navy, had been blown to atoms.

As the news was being read, all eyes were turned on Bernadotte, who, alone in the whole of France, had risked his popularity and reputation by daring to predict this calamity. He had little to say on the subject, but appeared to be unusually thoughtful. At the same time he kept his views to himself. He had no intention whatever of being a Cassandra while on his honeymoon.

CHAPTER VIII

HAPPY DAYS

THE first year of Bernadotte's marriage was probably the happiest period in the lives of the four people with whom this narrative is mainly connected—Julie, Joseph, Bernadotte and Desirée. The one all-sufficing reason for their happiness was the absence of Napoleon.

Julie, now the mother of two charming girls, Zenaïde and Charlotte, was probably the happiest of them all. Plain in appearance, amiable in disposition, unhampered by money troubles, totally unambitious, respected by her husband, adored by her children, it really seemed that life was being unduly kind and gracious to her. But by far her greatest pleasure was derived from the alteration in her sister, who was still her warmest friend and closest confidante, as indeed she was throughout the lives of them both. She had felt, as was natural to one of her disposition, a certain guilt in depriving Desirée of an attractive husband and a comfortable home. She was happy to see that this obstacle had now been removed, and that Desirée had found a husband far more to her liking than either Joseph or Napoleon could ever have been.

Joseph likewise shared his wife's affection for their home and children. There was, however, a certain Bonapartist characteristic in his composition which made him restless and anxious to be in the limelight. For that reason he interested himself in politics and, in company with Lucien, was elected to the Council of Five Hundred, which in those days was the equivalent of our House of Commons. This Chamber made proposals in legislature which could become law, provided that they were passed by the Upper House, which was known as the Council of the Ancients. (The procedure in France at that time was very similar to that of England. The only difference was in nomenclature: the Council of Five Hundred was the House of Commons and the Council of Ancients was the House of Lords.)

The French Army at this time was fighting on no less than four different fronts—Egypt, Germany, Switzerland and Italy—and Desirée was soon to learn that there was very little domestic life for any professional soldier, even in peace time. She had been married for a bare two months when her husband received an order to take up an important command in the Army of Mainz. This post was more civil than military, for it consisted mainly in conciliating the conquered Hessians in the neighbourhood of the Black Forest: hostilities were to be avoided, and only opened in the event of more peaceful measures proving abortive. It was not a job of outstanding national importance, but it was very much to Bernadotte's liking, for it served to show up

those sterling points in his character which later proved such a tremendous asset for France in general and Napoleon in particular.

Bernadotte had never liked the part that he had been called upon to play in the Italian campaign. His own military reputation rested on his steadfastness, courage and resource, which he invariably displayed in times of trouble when disaster was imminent. In Britain such qualities have always been admired and extolled in a military leader, but that has not been the case in France. It might be said that if Bernadotte had been a cricketer, he would have been a Leyland rather than a Jessopp—and France has always given preference to the most spectacular. Again, the objectives of the Italian campaign—which was a pure looting expedition—were entirely foreign to his principles. He abhorred the idea of plundering a down-trodden foe, and thus became a figure of sarcasm and scorn among his brother generals, including Napoleon himself.

His appointment in Hesse enabled him for the first time in his life to put his principles into action, and the success of his administration has never been questioned. In the four months between November, 1798, and February, 1799, all friction between the French and Hessians was completely eliminated. Before leaving the country he was handed a memorial which started with these words: "Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, very celebrated for his exploits, very brave, very prudent, very worthy of respect and kind towards our country while it was occupied by his troops. Generous and liberal towards our Academy, and an illustrious protector of Science and Art . . ." The memorial proceeded to state that the people desired above everything to make him a rich gift, but could only offer him a private domain owing to the exhausted state of their treasury. When Bernadotte read these words he replied with characteristic scorn, "Do you take me for a Jew? I only acted for humanity."

On his return to Paris he found that changes had taken place in Joseph's house. Desirée was about to become a mother, and the event absorbed the interest of the other women. Joseph and Lucien were steeped in politics, while the campaign in Egypt from which so much had been expected, had devolved into a stalemate. At the same time Joseph was being a most assiduous correspondent, and there was no question but that he was keeping Napoleon well and thoroughly informed on every movement and every incident that was happening in Paris.

Barras, it appeared, had recalled Bernadotte from Hesse for the express purpose of offering him the command of the Army of Italy, in the hope that Bernadotte might introduce measures of decency and order among the population. It was clear that some very serious troubles had flared up in this country, owing partly to the ruthless exploitation of Italian property by French officers, and partly to the relaxation and reduction of the occupying forces. Bernadotte stipulated that the garrisons should be heavily reinforced in order that he might take strong military action, should the necessity arise, but this was too much for the Directory, who refused to comply. Accordingly Bernadotte turned down the offer and the post was given to Scherer, who had held it before the campaign of Napoleon. The result of this appointment was disastrous. A few weeks after his arrival, Scherer was heavily defeated in battle, and Italy regained almost all of her land and possessions.

And now comes one of the high lights in Bernadotte's life. He was offered the chance of a *coup d'état*! Only those acquainted with

Continental history will understand the deep significance of those words. The event came about in this way. The Directory was under the sway of five men, of whom by far the most important were Barras and Sieyès. The country was irritated at the slowness of the Egyptian campaign, and enraged by the loss of the Italian possessions; further, the popularity of the old revolutionaries, now called the Jacobins, was distinctly on the decline. Barras and Sieyès decided that they wanted to rid themselves of the other three men by means of a *coup d'état*, and they approached Bernadotte in the hopes that he might be willing to take command of the military side of the experiment.

It was the first time in his life that Bernadotte was presented with an offer of this sort. It was obvious that if such a coup took place, and if it were successful, then France would be under the sway of these three men, and after a while the two politicians would fade out, as is the case with all professional politicians, and Bernadotte would be left as the Dictator of France. He turned the matter over in his mind, gave it a great deal of consideration and even discussed it—like an idiot—in the presence of Joseph and Lucien. He reasoned that there were two strong objections to his acceptance. The first was a natural resentment on his part to go against the Jacobins, who had been responsible for rescuing him from those twelve years in the ranks. The second was far more personal. In the event of military action arising in the streets of Paris, there might be serious effects on Desirée, whose confinement was rapidly approaching.

For those two reasons he turned down the offer. Had he accepted it the whole history of France and the Napoleonic era might have been re-written. In actual fact his refusal made little difference, for within a few weeks the power came round to Barras. All the same, he had let an opportunity slip. And wise men declare that opportunities of that sort do not come more than once in a lifetime. Subsequent chapters will show whether they are right or not.

Meanwhile, the foreign situation was deteriorating at an alarming speed. France was drifting into one of those fits of patriotic apathy which are such a feature of her story. The people were becoming tired of the rule of the Directory, and they were not particularly interested in Barras. Recruits and conscripts for the services were not arriving in necessary numbers, and there was a great deal of plague and disease in the country. Added to all this, the guns of Sir Sydney Smith were showing scanty respect to the invincible French Army in Palestine, and it was obvious that something drastic would have to be done. Barras thought that a good War Minister might revive France, and so he offered that post to Bernadotte. This time it was accepted.

And so it came about that in the early summer of 1799 Bernadotte achieved a double event. He became War Minister of France and at the same time he became the father of a beautiful boy.

The new appointment made an extraordinary change in the character and bearing of Bernadotte. From being the cautious and very prudent soldier-politician, he suddenly became his own original self again—the fiery, eloquent and theatrical Gascon. His job was to vitalise the army, and he went about it with a vigour and originality that are almost incredible. In cold print his methods might appear to be those of a madman; but in cold truth, they were most effective. Read the letter he wrote to a general, informing him that he had been appointed to a command:—

To General Championnet.

The Directory, by its order of the past month, appoints you Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Alps. Thirty thousand brave men await you, impatient to resume the offensive under your orders. A fortnight ago you were in chains. Now you are delivered, and public opinion condemns your persecutors. Your cause has become the cause of the nation. Could you wish for a happier lot? For men like you the suffering of injustice only intensifies the love of country.

Go, my friend, cover the traces of your chains with new laurels. Efface those traces, or rather preserve them as marks of honour. I embrace you as I love you.

BERNADOTTE.

Listen to Bernadotte, the orator, speaking to young recruits:—

My children, you are the hope of the Fatherland. The law has summoned you to the standards. A few days ago I reminded your chiefs of their duties, to-day I speak to you of yours. A soldier whom the Revolution has drawn from the obscure ranks of the army can trace for his young comrades the path that he himself has pursued.

The military career has its pains and fatigues, but it has pleasures that surpass them. If upon you falls the duty of gaining the triumph of Liberty, you will be the first to enjoy its advantages. The knowledge of that is the incentive to brave actions, and Liberty is the lever. To this active inspiration we owe all the illustrious men who are at this moment the glory of the Republic.

I have laid bare the secret of your strength. Remember that there are amongst you men who will be the great captains of the future. Think of the might of France in the days of her slavery. How much mightier is she now that she has become free.

Imagine such words being delivered to a crowd of recruits in the sacred precincts of Whitehall! Nevertheless, in their own setting they were most effective.

Then came that awful task, before which all soldiers tremble and quiver, namely the request for money from an unwilling Treasury. Bernadotte went about this task in a very Gascon way. He called on the Finance Minister and painted a heart-rending description of the burning necessity for funds for the fighting forces. The Minister listened and then gave exactly the same reply that every Finance Minister has given since the first chapter of Genesis. Whereupon Bernadotte leapt out of his chair, foamed at the mouth, drew his sword, brandished it round his head, and danced about the room like a Russian.

It was very unconventional, but he managed to get some money.

A picture of Bernadotte at this time has been given us by Barras himself: "He was living in the Rue Cisalpine in a small maisonette that cost hardly 20,000 francs. He was very attached to it, partly because he had bought it out of his military savings and partly because it was there that his wife gave birth to a son, the only child they ever had."

"He rose every morning at 3 a.m., reaching the Ministry of War by 4 a.m. with his secretary. He had given orders that no letters should remain unanswered overnight, and had infused such energy into the department that this order which appeared at first impossible of execution, was rigorously carried out, and everything was up to date. In this way he reorganised and created over a hundred new

battalions of more than a thousand men each. After working on Directory reports for fifteen or sixteen hours, he returned at 7 p.m. to the Rue Cisalpine. At this time his wife was recovering from her confinement, and when the minister returned, there were often present either or both of the two Bonaparte brothers, Joseph and Lucien. They had come there on the pretence of inquiring after Madame Bernadotte's health."

The tiny house in the Cisalpine mentioned above was bought by Bernadotte shortly after his return from Hesse. Desirée remarked when she first saw it that it was no bigger than a doll's house. Later they called it The Cradle, by which name it was known to their circle of friends.

In spite of Bernadotte's non-stop energy, he failed in his task of supplying sufficient men to the three armies in Holland, Switzerland and Italy. It was not quite so bad in Holland, but the tide in Italy had definitely turned against the French. In Switzerland the problem was different. Here the French Army was commanded by Massena, who had taken a violent dislike to Bernadotte from the very day when he marched the reinforcing division into the Italian camp. Massena strongly disapproved of the appointment of Bernadotte to the Ministry of War, and showed his chagrin by insisting on complete inactivity on his own war front. If Egypt had not been so far away, he would have communicated his feelings to Napoleon. As he could not do this, he sent them to Joseph Bonaparte in Paris. Unknown to Bernadotte, these criticisms along with many others were duly passed on to Napoleon.

Although Bernadotte was considered to be doing well at the War Ministry, it was clear that things were happening behind the scenes. Open warfare had broken out between Barras and Sieyes, and the latter was drifting ever nearer in the direction of the Bonapartes. Hence it came about that for a second time Bernadotte was approached by Barras with the object of displacing the unpleasant partner by means of a *coup d'état*. But again Bernadotte refused.

This time he argued that he was friends with all the political parties and did not want to become an enemy of any of them. That was perhaps what he liked to think. Anyhow, there was something wrong somewhere, for his resignation was handed in after only three months of office. Its suddenness was a surprise to everybody, and even Bernadotte could never explain satisfactorily how it was brought about. It was one of those cases in which nobody knew for certain whether the retiring Minister had resigned or been dismissed.

A few days before he vacated office, Bernadotte was surprised to receive an official call from Joseph Bonaparte.

"I have come to ask you if you have ever considered the question of recalling my brother from Egypt."

"I could not possibly do that, for it would amount to nothing more nor less than a dictatorship."

"But your friend, Barras, has on several occasions expressed his regret that Napoleon is so long absent from France."

"The natural place for a Commander-in-Chief is with his army."

"Well, it is not a matter of great consequence," said Joseph, shrugging his shoulders. "I was just suggesting it. . . . Of course, you know that he may arrive any day now."

Having delivered these words in a casual, off-hand manner, Joseph walked out of the office, leaving the minister aghast with puzzlement.

What on earth did Joseph mean? Could it be possible that the

frequent visits of Joseph and Lucien to Bernadotte's "Cradle" had an ulterior motive? Was the fraternal devotion to Desirée as genuine as they tried to make out? Were those visits made for the sole purpose of spying on him? Could Desirée in her sweet innocence have passed information to these men that might be of great political value to them?

For the next few days Bernadotte was silent and reserved, and full of repression, especially towards Desirée. She apparently guessed his suspicions and merely laughed at him. Bernadotte believed her, and consoled himself by repeating that he had not a single enemy in Paris.

It was true that he had no enemy in Paris, but he most certainly had an enemy in Egypt. He had been the innocent victim of endless correspondence written to Napoleon by his two brothers. Every action of Bernadotte had been minutely described—his failures and his successes. He could never have guessed that Napoleon was jealous of his ever-growing popularity. He was to learn afterwards that the unknown causes that had dismissed him from office were neatly arranged, organised and carried out by a combination of Napoleon, Joseph, Lucien, Massena . . . and Desirée.

He was soon to receive an eye-opener. Within a month of Joseph's visit, the news was brought to him that Napoleon had left his army in Egypt and had himself returned to France.

CHAPTER IX

PARIS IN A FLUTTER

MOST writers are in agreement with the slogan that "when Napoleon returned from Egypt he saw the Crown of France lying in the gutter. He picked it up with the point of his sword and placed it on his own head." It also is agreed that his return to France was one of the most timely deeds that he ever accomplished. Indeed, whether by accident or design, he could not possibly have chosen a better moment. He crept into France alone, in silence, and with the tread of a cat. Nobody had heard of him for months, nobody knew where he was. Then, with dramatic suddenness and clever management, it was announced that he was back in France. All Paris streamed to Malmaison, found that it was true, and then went mad with delight.

It brought cheers and joy to the people of Paris. It brought consternation and bitterness to the house in Malmaison where Josephine was openly and unblushingly living with a merchant called Charles. It caused the wildest enthusiasm at the house in Mortefontaine, where Joseph and Lucien had been long expecting him. It caused grief and gloom to the Cradle in Cisalpine, where Bernadotte was temporarily stunned. But it caused the deepest depression of all to Barras, who now began to fear that his political career was beginning to draw to an end.

Napoleon was not greatly interested in his wife's latest attachment: the merchant decamped with very great haste, and very little dignity, and that was all that mattered to him. On his arrival he went straight to Mortefontaine to hear what his brothers had to say. They told him that the word "*coup d'état*" was on the lips of everybody. That there had already been two minor examples, ending in smoke and nothingness: that Paris now wanted something on a larger and

grander scale, and that she was waiting and hoping that Napoleon would provide it.

"They will have it," said Napoleon, rubbing his hands with pleasure. "Sieyes will be on my side. Barras will be against me, but I can deal with him. The other lawyers are of no consequence. But what about the generals?"

"There are only two that will oppose you. Moreau and Bernadotte."

"Moreau! What can he do? He's just a harmless little man. But Bernadotte! I am not so sure about him."

In reply they gave him the details of Bernadotte's emphatic refusal to take part in the two "coups" that Barras had arranged for him: they told him that Barras was horrified with the pig-headed obstinacy and lack of initiative in this man. At these words Napoleon threw his arms in the air.

"But what a fool! What an idiot! As Minister of War he was approached by Augereau and other generals and told that he must get rid of Barras, Sieyes and Fouché, and the other lawyers. What did Bernadotte do? Nothing at all. He asked for proofs of their guilt—there were none. He asked for powers—nobody could give him any." He then went on to utter a phrase, a Napoleonism, that has outlived its inventor over many years. "*This stupid fellow cannot see that Power is not for him who earns it, but for him who grasps it.*" He should have seized those powers, but he was either too stupid or too timid to do anything like that. He is totally incapable of even recognising an opportunity, much less of grasping it."

"You are right," replied Joseph. "He courts responsibility, and when he gets it, he immediately becomes afraid of it. At the same time you will be making a great mistake if you underestimate this man."

"I do not underestimate him. He has certain qualities and he is honest. Still, he is a very dangerous man and, in fact, an obstacle. I would ignore him were it not for his gift of haranguing the troops. If he did that against me he might upset my plans and even seize power for himself. His most dangerous weapon is not his sword. It is his oratory."

In due course every word of the above conversation became public property, and Paris was delighted to hear it. Paris learned for the first time that there would be opposition, and in her mind a "coup" without a certain amount of fighting and bloodshed was not a "coup" at all! She did not want a walk-over. She was intrigued with the phrase "Bernadotte is an obstacle." From that moment public opinion regarded Bernadotte as the obstacle, or the Obstacle Man.

Meanwhile, what was happening in the Cradle? The news of Napoleon's return came as a stunning blow to Bernadotte. Désirée, it should be admitted, was more interested in baby Oscar than she was in her husband. After a while Bernadotte fell into a reverie from which he roused himself with difficulty. Then he proceeded to rage and storm, tramping round the tiny cottage shouting "Bonaparte shall pay for this. He had no right to do it."

On the following morning he repaired to the Ministry of War. He made straight for his former Chief Secretary, General Sarrazin, who was also a close personal friend. He said that he wished to speak to the chiefs of all the departmental branches. Sarrazin was only too delighted to comply with his request, and in a short time these men were all assembled for the purpose of listening to what Bernadotte had to tell them.

"A year ago, I warned you all about the hazards of invading Egypt while the English fleet was undefeated. As you know, my apprehensions on that painful subject have been fully justified. Under the leadership of Bonaparte the French Army has fought a difficult campaign with unexampled gallantry. But Bonaparte has proved himself incapable of bringing this war to a conclusion. (Here there were some subdued murmurs.) To-day, as you all know, he is back in Paris while his army is still baking and roasting in that sun-scorched climate."

He paused to allow these Frenchmen to let off steam which they proceeded to do with plenty of clatter and clamour. It did not in the least matter to Bernadotte that every officer in that room was opposed to him: it merely gave him encouragement, for this man was a born orator. After a few minutes he resumed, speaking his words in a high, sharp tone, slowly and with deep feeling.

"I maintain that he is guilty of the greatest and gravest crime that a soldier can commit. *When on Active Service, Desertion in the Face of the Enemy*. (Here there were loud and uncontrolled shouts of protest.) He has come to Paris, and is now, to my knowledge, intriguing for political power. I maintain that this man, this Bonaparte, should be arrested and tried by Court-Martial."

"But, General," said a voice, "we are merely an advisory body. Have we the power to make such a decision?"

Again he paused. Similar questions had been put to him at least three times a day when he was War Minister. It was the natural type of question asked by ninety-five per cent of every army in every country and in every period. All soldiers have been taught that unauthorised action is a military crime—unless of course the responsibility can be shifted to other shoulders. Bernadotte was well aware of this military precept, as was only natural, seeing that he himself had practised it throughout his career. He was prepared for the question and answered back on his interrupter.

"How can you ask such a question? Of course it is in our power, provided only that you gentlemen will agree that Bonaparte has committed a military offence."

He was met by a silence, far more shattering than voices of either approval or dissent. He knew perfectly well what it meant. All oratory all persuasion, every appeal to justice, humanity, devotion or any higher sentiment would always be received by professional soldiers with icy indifference: the only spur that will ever drive them to action is a major Army Order or a minor paragraph in King's Regulations!

"It is quite clear that your views are different from those that I hold. But I have a duty to France and the Republic. Gentlemen, I shall perform my duty and all your protestations will be of no avail, for I refuse to swerve—no, not by a fraction. Therefore, in your presence and hearing, I reserve to myself the right of arresting General Napoleon Bonaparte on two distinct charges: firstly for evading the sanitation laws in entering France and secondly for deserting his army while on active service."

These were brave words, and it now remained to be seen whether he would dare to put them into action. They were repeated in the streets throughout the capital, and Paris was thrilled. Paris had realised and was now fully aware that she "had something." During the next few days she became interested in three households: in Malmaison, where Napoleon was crouching like a lion about to spring; in Mortefon-

taine, where Joseph lived in gaudy grandeur, lending his house to all the plotters and conspirators in his family ; and lastly in the tiny house in the Cisalpine, where Bernadotte was remaining staunch to the Republic, and had let it be known that he was prepared to fight for it. There was no question as to which was the favourite. Paris had now recovered from the Revolution but was inundated with political parties. Paris wanted a dictator, and considered that the time was ripe for a dictatorship. Napoleon had caught the public eye by his Italian campaign, and had succeeded in retaining it in spite of reverses and reversions in Egypt. Seeing that he was the obvious candidate for France's leadership, the people paid court to him in a way that they had never done before. Only one prominent person held aloof from Malmaison, and that person was Bernadotte.

It is only natural that the obstinacy of Bernadotte caused grave concern to Desirée, who now found herself the centre of two forces that were bitterly opposed to one another. In her dilemma she turned to Julie for advice, and learned that the "old woman" was deeply offended at her husband's attitude. (It should be explained that the "old woman" was the nickname used by Desirée and Pauline when they referred to Josephine.) Eventually, after a great deal of persuasion and pressure from his female relatives, Bernadotte consented to pay his respects to Malmaison.

Napoleon and Josephine were alone together when they received Bernadotte, which they did with a great show of friendship and affability. He found that the "old woman" possessed a lively manner, and was deeply concerned in the health of Desirée, which seemed to him to be a very kindly feeling that was by no means reciprocated. She wanted to know all about little Oscar. How old was he ? Had he a nurse ? and many similar questions. All this time Napoleon sat in silence, listening and watching. At length the subject changed, and he began to talk.

He told Bernadotte about the Egyptian campaign and all the trials and difficulties caused by the climate. Bernadotte noticed that his sallow complexion was now browner and his hair was cut short. He had in fact discarded the man's fashion of long hair, or "dog's ears," as it was called in Paris.

"The condition of the army was bad enough, but it is nothing compared to the deplorable state of France. These fools in the Directory have sacrificed everything I brought them from the Italian war."

"That is not the case," said Bernadotte, with great emphasis. "Our armies have been most successful in Holland and Switzerland. It is true that we have had a few reverses in Italy, but we still hold Genoa. Don't forget that we have raised over two hundred thousand men for the army and forty thousand horse. We shall soon be at a loss to know what to do with these men, unless we pour them into Germany and Italy. Now if you, Citizen-General, had brought back your army from Egypt, your veterans would have provided us with well-trying and experienced officers for our new regiments. But, as far as I can see, we must regard that army as lost to us. I do not despair of the Republic and am convinced that she will resist all her enemies, both domestic and foreign." At these words he leaned forward, with his piercing eyes flashing at Napoleon, and added, "I repeat—both domestic and foreign."

Napoleon had not failed to notice the poisoned shaft conveyed in

those words, which hinted at himself being one of the "domestic enemies" of France. He winced at the repetition and muttered something about the strength of the new armies being so great that the Army of Egypt was of little consequence. But at this point Josephine intervened. She had seen the expression in Bernadotte's eyes when he talked of the domestic enemies, and abruptly turned the conversation, bringing it back to Desirée and little Oscar.

This meeting was duly described first by Bernadotte to Desirée, and then by Napoleon to his two brothers. For a long time it was the sole topic of discussion in each of the three houses. Both Desirée and Julie were highly amused at the maternal interest of the "old woman" in little Oscar, and for a time Bernadotte was regarded as a kind of comedian—a brand new role for him. But, unfortunately, it had other effects as well.

These two girls had never been meant to play any part in the developments of any political or national cause. Their part in life was that of a pair of spectators, and it is needless to add that their peculiar positions enabled them to obtain a close-up view of the many adventures, changes and dramas that took place in this amazing period. In the story that is about to be unfolded, if they could only have remained spectators, all would have been well. But by this time they were both Parisians and in a position to pull the strings, if they chose to do so. And is that not the main ambition of every Parisian woman, either on the stage or in real life?

It is therefore unfair to blame Desirée and Julie too much for the parts that they played during the hectic days of Brumaire. But as far as this narrative is concerned, it must be admitted that their sympathies were entirely with the Bonapartes, thereby forcing Bernadotte to engage in a struggle, alone and unaided, against overwhelming odds.

A few days after the Malmaison meeting, Napoleon and Bernadotte met by chance at the Théâtre Français. Napoleon shook hands with him and asked him if he was going to a party that Joseph and Julie were giving on the following day.

"Yes. I have been asked to go and I have accepted."

"I am glad to hear that. Will you allow me to take coffee to-morrow at your house, for I want to see you both."

"Of course. We shall be delighted to see you."

On the following day he duly appeared at the Cradle, and it was a new experience for Desirée to act as hostess for Napoleon in Paris, reminding her, as she put it, of the old days in Marseilles. She had prepared a wonderful spread of dainties, remarking that it was simply to try and make him forget all the delights of Egypt. It was a very happy little party, the conversation being for the most part of a domestic nature. Only once was there a mention of current affairs, in which Napoleon spoke disparagingly of Moreau, who possessed only one virtue, which he described as "loyalty to myself and my cause." Otherwise there was no special incident.

All this time the arrangements for a new "*coup d'état*" were being carefully and minutely planned at Mortefontaine. Desirée knew all about the meetings that were being held by the conspirators, but she had been sworn to secrecy, and gave her promise that she would divulge nothing to her husband. She kept her promise, thereby acting in direct opposition to him. On the 6th of November, Bernadotte actually attended a social reception given by Napoleon at Malmaison, at which he chatted in a friendly way to nearly all the members of the

Bonaparte family. His relations with Joseph in particular were as cordial as they had ever been.

On the following day, the 7th of November, 1799, the "*coup d'état*" was put into action. It was planned to last two days—the 8th and 9th of November—after which there would be either dictatorial power or, if it failed, defeat and oblivion.

It may be a matter of passing interest that an almost identical "*coup*" was planned to take place on that very day—the 8th of November—exactly one hundred and twenty-four years later. The second one was staged in Munich by Adolf Hitler, in 1923. The main difference between them was that the "*coup*" of Napoleon was a success, while that of Hitler was a failure. The name given to the former was "*Brumaire*," while that of the latter was "*the Putsch*."

CHAPTER X

BRUMAIRE

THE *coup d'état* which was known as Brumaire took place in Paris on the 8th and 9th of November. It had been arranged entirely by the brothers Joseph and Lucien Bonaparte, and their political supporters. They had planned for the first day that there would be a huge mass of armed soldiers in the streets outside Napoleon's house at Malmaison and also outside the Palace of the Tuileries, which was the Headquarters of the Directory. These soldiers were to be something more than police in that they had the power to order the public about and in general make a nuisance of themselves. They belonged to Napoleon's private army, who would fight, if the necessity arose. The National Guard was the property of the nation, and it was therefore of outstanding importance to the Bonapartes that the National Guard should be won over to their side. This was to be done by diplomacy, if possible, or by force if necessary.

It was also decided that on the second day Napoleon should present himself at both of the two debating chambers of the Directory, the Council of Ancients and the Council of Five Hundred for the purpose of presenting his case. If his request was to be turned down, as it most certainly would be, then force would be used in clearing both chambers of their members with the help of the National Guard. The brothers intended to offer the proposal to the two Houses that the governing body of the Directory should be handed over to three persons, who would be known as Consuls and include their brother, Napoleon.

The military resistance to this plot was placed in the hands of Bernadotte, who, up to this time, had formed no definite plan of action whatever.

THE 8TH OF NOVEMBER

Early in the morning Joseph paid a personal call at the Cradle and told Bernadotte that Napoleon wanted to see him on a matter of pressing importance. The two men, dressed as civilians, repaired to Malmaison, where they found all the streets and approaches thronged with officers in uniform, while the civil police were shouting and using threatening words to an inquisitive crowd. The police gave passage

to the two men who were conspicuous owing to their dress. While on their way, Bernadotte acknowledged the salutes of General Moreau, his chief partner in the resistance movement, and also his ex-secretary Sazzarin, who was his great personal friend. Both these men were in full uniform. The two men finally reached the house at Malmaison, where they found Napoleon in one of his very good humours.

"Good morning, General. I am glad to see you, but I notice that you are not in uniform."

"I am not on duty."

"But you soon will be."

"I think not."

If Bernadotte had been in uniform, he would have received a rough handling for speaking thus. As it was, Napoleon only laughed and came up to him. Then, in a most friendly manner, he took Bernadotte by the arm and led him into a side room where the two men were alone.

"Look here, General. I pray you to be reasonable. You know as well as I do that the Directory is governing badly and leading France to ruin. We have got to put it right. The Council of Ancients has appointed me to take command of the National Guard and all the troops in the city of Paris. I shall be going to the Tuileries this morning, and if you will put on your uniform and join me, you will be very welcome."

"That," replied Bernadotte, "is quite impossible."

"Ah, I see how it is. You think you can rely on Moreau and a few others like him. But you are mistaken. You will see them all come to me, including Moreau. You do not know men as I do. They promise much but do nothing. Do not trust them."

"I do not intend to take part in any rebellion nor to upset a constitution for which so many have shed their blood."

"Very well, then. Stay here till I have received the decree from the Council of Ancients, which will hand me command. Until then I have no authority." (Perhaps it may be noted that at the start of this conversation Napoleon claimed that he was already in possession of this decree. Bernadotte did not fail to notice that the man had lied to him.)

"General, I am a man who may be killed, but refuse to be ordered about. As a citizen, you cannot detain me against my will." (This man, thought Napoleon, was playing a civilian part remarkably well.)

"If you will come to my side, you shall be one of my principal colleagues, and you will be amply rewarded. Surely you will not risk your future career and that of your family by being so obstinate."

"I refuse to be a party to an illegal act."

Napoleon was beginning to fidget, a sure sign that he was getting angry. He managed, however, to control himself.

"Promise me that you will undertake nothing against me."

Bernadotte paused before replying. "Yes. All right, I will. As a French citizen, I give you that promise."

"What do you mean by 'as a French citizen'?"

"I mean that if I receive orders from the Directory or from any recognised legislative body, I shall be prepared to do all in my power to oppose those who would try to overthrow the constitution."

"Oh, you need not worry about that. I have laid my plans and taken precautions, and I assure you that you will receive no such orders. They fear your ambition more than mine. Besides, I want

nothing for myself. I shall retire to Malmaison and surround myself with my friends. If you wish to be of their number, we shall be delighted to welcome you."

Bernadotte retired and as he passed through the uniformed crowd along with Joseph, they both noticed the messenger from the Council of Ancients bearing an official message for Napoleon. The two men paused, and for a time spoke to some of their friends. Bernadotte was intrigued by that message and wondered what it contained. Did it give Napoleon the command of the National Guard, or was it a blunt refusal? Almost immediately afterwards the order was given to the assembled officers to repair at once to the Tuileries. They all obeyed and went off. Joseph naturally assumed that the message indicated that Napoleon had been given command of the troops, but Bernadotte was not quite so sure. "Whatever it is, I feel sure that you must be hungry, and I insist on your coming to breakfast with me," said Joseph with a laugh, and Bernadotte assented.

It was a large and a strange party for whom Julie had prepared an excellent breakfast. It consisted for the most part of Members of the Five Hundred (the Lower House) and Bernadotte recognised many faces that were politically in strong opposition to the Bonaparte faction. It was clear to him that they had been invited to Mortefontaine to prevent them from being in a place where they might do damage to the cause. During the meal Joseph kept on repeating that his brother had no desire whatever to obtain political power, but was only acting for the good of the nation, and that there would be rich and choice rewards for all those colleagues who gave active support to their movement.

After breakfast Bernadotte, all alone and still in mufti, decided to go to the Tuileries and see what was happening there. He found the same crowd of officers, behaving in exactly the same way as at Malmaison, meaning, of course, that they were doing nothing at all. This time some of them spoke to him, but he was not in a talkative mood, and only gave them evasive replies. He lingered for a while and then, having nothing better to do, he returned to The Cradle and had lunch with Desirée.

In the afternoon he received a surprise visit from General Moreau, who was still in uniform. He had been spending the day as every soldier should, a day fraught with military duty. From dawn till breakfast he had been hanging about the streets at Malmaison, and for the rest of the day he had been doing the same thing outside the Tuileries. He said that he was surprised to note that Bernadotte had remained faithful to the republican cause.

"A few days ago General Bonaparte came in person to my house, where he told me that on that very morning he had taken coffee with you and Madame Bernadotte, where he had been treated as a highly honoured guest and had received the assurance of support from both of you."

Bernadotte remembered the incident; remembered also that Moreau was supposed to have had the one good quality of "loyalty to myself and to my cause." Bernadotte was horrified at the duplicity of this man who invited himself to his opponents' houses and then spread lies about them in the hopes that they would break partnership. Moreau, however, held a different view; he thought it a clever tactical move which might easily have been unsuccessful.

Both men were fully aware that the big events would take place on the morrow. Bernadotte wanted to know what Moreau would do in the event of a military outbreak, and it turned out that Moreau could not possibly do anything at all, *unless he had a written order*. It was the same old thing ! But this time Moreau was actually given his written order, handed to him by Bernadotte himself, and couched in Bernadotte's own peculiar style. Here is the exact translation :—

Present yourself to-morrow at my door at the head of a detachment, however small. Summon me in the name of the Republic to defend Liberty and the Constitution. I shall mount my horse and with my aides-de-camp will place myself under your orders. I shall harangue the troops and cause Bonaparte to be arrested and tried by court-martial for deserting the Army of Egypt. I shall be ready to bring back his head on a charger.

Moreau liked the verbosity, but did not care so much for the responsibility. While they were discussing it, they were joined by a party of generals who had come there for the purpose of doing nothing but talk. They did, however, bring one piece of news. The message that Joseph and Bernadotte had seen in the hands of the messenger was admittedly a communication from the Council of Ancients, but it was only an invitation to him to come to their Chamber on the morrow and present his case. It did not contain a word about the National Guard, which was still under the control of the Directory. Having delivered this information they all proceeded to talk, talk, talk. They had no settled plan, and every proposal submitted was quickly shattered. They wanted a leader, and all agreed that Bernadotte was most qualified for the post. Beyond that they refused to go. They professed profound contempt for the order about Bernadotte bringing back Napoleon's head on a charger. They did, however, come to a rather half-hearted agreement that Bernadotte had proposed

“In the event of General Bonaparte being appointed to the command of the National Guard, one of the members shall propose that General Bernadotte should be the colleague of General Bonaparte in command of the National Guard.”

These few words comprised the sum result of all the deliberations of that eventful day. After they had been passed Bernadotte stood up and told them that “if such a motion is adopted, within twenty minutes I shall be in your midst and, if necessary, proclaim Bonaparte an outlaw.”

Over in Malmaison, Napoleon was troubled and restless. It had not been a satisfactory day for him, and he foresaw difficulties on the morrow. He had discovered some of the differences between military and political strategy. He had learned that in politics, personal integrity played a large and important part, and for that reason he would have liked Bernadotte to be on his side. If that Gascon were to play false to his friends and give play to his oratory by haranguing the troops, then the day might well be lost. At midnight he was visited by a messenger who handed him a written note from Joseph :—

Bernadotte had a meeting this evening at his own house. The best suggestion that he could put forward is that you and he should be appointed joint Chiefs of the National Guard, after which he will arrest you.

Napoleon read the laconic message and roared with laughter. He now had no doubts or misgivings as to the ultimate issue.

THE 9TH OF NOVEMBER

Early on the following morning Napoleon drove to St. Cloud. He was in very high spirits. He was inclined, as was his wont, to overestimate his own chances and underestimate those of his adversary. He had obtained from the Council of Ancients the command of the National Guard. At least the Ancients had never given him this command, but they had been stupid enough to send him a private message, which he showed to nobody, but at the same time he told everybody that the message contained an order to take over the National Guard. He had put his own precept into operation in that he had not been given the power, but had grasped it.

He entered the Council of Ancients who were in session. The members were no different from those of other Second Chambers, being bored, tired, lackadaisical, and for the most part, fast asleep. After a while he was noticed, and the Council called on him to address them. He was not at all willing, for he knew his own limitations as an orator. However, he assented and mounted the rostrum. He was very nervous, and it was clear that he had no control over his voice. He mumbled something about his victories in Italy and how all his conquests had been frustrated by the incompetency of the Directory, and after that he stopped—and passed out. He became tongue-tied and did the only thing possible in the circumstances, namely, to come down to earth and disappear as quickly as possible.

At this time Bernadotte was alone with Desirée at The Cradle. Not a word was spoken by either of them. He was in full uniform and frequently paced the room, looking anxiously at the clock. Both were wondering what was happening at St. Cloud. Both were waiting for news.

Napoleon turned his back on the Ancients and passed along to the Five Hundred. Here the atmosphere was different, for the place was alert and the members were indulging in long and vitriolic diatribes against himself. This was in spite of the fact that Lucien was President (corresponding to Mr. Speaker) and Joseph was doing his best to "lobby" support for him. He was quickly observed when a member drew attention to him by calling him by name and asking him to speak. Napoleon very stupidly consented, and did not manage to finish his opening sentence before being howled down by the opposition. Once again he disappeared from the scene and amused himself by looking over the private guard of uniformed soldiers that was on duty for the purpose of protecting the Talking Five Hundred.

By this time he was beginning to doubt his chances of success. He had tried and he had failed, and for the moment there was nothing for him to do. His first thought was to call his own troops into action, but he did not want bloodshed in the streets of Paris—they would be too like the grim days of the Revolution. He decided to leave things as they were in the hope that some miracle might take place which might turn things in his favour.

Back in The Cradle, Bernadotte was even more agitated than before. He kept looking at the clock, which showed that it was past one o'clock. Precious time was being wasted and there was no sign of any messenger from Moreau appealing to him to come forward and save the situation. He tramped up and down the little room, occasionally looking out of the window, till he observed a familiar carriage which contained the figure of Julie. Being in no mood to listen to feminine talk he put on his hat and went for a walk by himself.

"Oh, Julie," burst forth Desirée, "I am so glad to see you. Do you know how my man has been spending the day? He has been tramping up and down, like a caged lion, waiting for a message calling on him to come and save the Government. He says that if Napoleon is elected to power, he will march on Paris and bring back his head on a charger. No wonder he was christened John the Baptist."

"He must be mad. Yesterday, Napoleon was at our house, and I heard him say 'I do not like Bernadotte. He is far too honest. If he continues to thwart me I shall drive him out of the army. He won't like that for he is a very keen soldier.'"

In saying these words Julie gave a most amusing imitation of Napoleon's voice and manner, which caused Desirée to burst into laughter. For some time they continued to talk in this vein, when they were interrupted by Bernadotte, who re-entered the room with an unusually serious expression on his face.

"I have come to ask," he said, looking at Desirée, "if you have made arrangements as to what you are going to do with the baby?"

"With little Oscar? What are you talking about?" Desirée was utterly bewildered by this change of manner.

"I think that he ought to be moved to a place of safety. You and I are in a very dangerous position. This coup will end in dictatorial powers for the winners and arrest and imprisonment for the losers. That is always the way with every coup. The hour is getting late, and I am afraid that we are the losers. In that case it will be the end of our little Cradle. The Police are sure to be along this evening."

"The Police!"

"Yes, the Police. Fouché is supporting Bonaparte, and he is a very ruthless man. I am certain to be arrested and so will you, little one, if you continue to stay in this house. I propose that you should leave me and take the baby to a place of refuge."

The two girls looked at one another, but there was no more laughter. For the first time they realised the gravity of the position. They had not foreseen this development, and the realisation filled them with a feeling akin to terror. Bernadotte had apparently taken it for granted that Desirée would want to leave him and go off with her sister. Julie insisted on taking the baby under her own protection. Desirée was in a pickle, she did not know what to do. All that she realised was that she had played with fire and it had scorched her. She saw that her husband was in great danger, and she decided to stick to him. Julie left The Cradle, carrying little Oscar in her arms. Behind her were left the lonely and forlorn figures of Bernadotte and Desirée.

Meanwhile, at the Tuileries, the miracle which Napoleon had looked for, actually took place. Lucien made a sudden and dramatic onslaught at the bickering Five Hundred, and by the sheer force of his voice and oratory persuaded his listeners that Napoleon's life was in danger. This statement was repeated so frequently and with such energy that eventually the private Guard of the Council was called out and as soon as that happened, the rest was easy. In a short time Napoleon's force was on the scene, and there was a real affray. There was no actual bloodshed, but the forces under Murat and Leclerc did their job and dispersed the lawyers and orators.

The final result of the day's work was that three men were elected to run the Government under the name of the Three Consuls. They consisted of Napoleon and two other men who will remain anonymous,

for the simple reason that they are not worth mentioning. At three o'clock that afternoon Napoleon drove back to Malmaison, highly satisfied with the day's work and the knowledge that he was First Consul for the next ten years.

Joseph and Lucien also drove back to Mortefontaine flushed with victory, but they received a very chilly welcome from Julie, who was not in the least interested in their doings of the day. In fact she was exceedingly angry with them both, and Joseph was both surprised and perplexed, for he had never seen the amiable Julie in such a temper before. She kept asking them what they had done to her sister, and they, in their turn, did not know what she was talking about.

Late that night they learned what it was. A messenger arrived to inform Joseph that Fouché's Police had visited The Cradle, which they found to be bolted, barred and ownerless. This piece of news drove Julie into a fury. She told the two men that their cursed politics would only bring misfortune and suffering to her house.

Thus ended Brumaire. Let us see how it affected the characters of this story. Bernadotte and Desirée were refugees, nobody knew where; Julie was in a demented fury; Joseph was, for the only time in his life, terrified of his wife; Napoleon was now the political as well as the military leader of France. Barras had completely faded out, and his name will not be encountered in the later pages of this narrative.

CHAPTER XI

DESIRÉE IN TROUSERS

It cannot be said that the victory of Brumaire brought unalloyed pleasure to the Bonaparte family. Napoleon was very irritable. This man had a remarkable gift of being able to steal for himself the credit and the laurels that rightly belonged to his subordinates. The most notable examples of this gift are to be found at Brumaire and Marengo, where he gained for himself great political and military victories. But he was well aware that Brumaire owed everything to Lucien and nothing to himself. He was also aware that he had made a fool of himself in front of a large crowd of people. That was a fact that he could never conceal, for everybody saw it and everybody knew it and, well—it left him very discontented.

In Joseph's house a storm was raging. The gentle and amiable Julie had been transformed into a little tigress who insisted on learning what had become of her sister. It was of no avail that both Joseph and Lucien swore that no harm could possibly come to either Desirée or her husband. Julie would listen to nothing. She just bundled the two men out of her house with strict orders that they were not to return until they could bring her definite news of her sister's safety.

The two brothers, oddly lacking in dignity, made their way to Paris and proceeded to call on their personal friends in search of information. Fouché, the Chief of Police, could tell them nothing that they did not already know, and could only authenticate that late on the previous night The Cradle had been deserted. They made other fruitless enquiries, and it was only in the evening that they repaired to the Office of the War Council. Here they saw Sazzarin, who evidently knew something. It was not, however, until they had pledged their

most solemn assurance that no harm would come to either Bernadotte or Desirée, that he made the following statement :—

"Yesterday evening when I arrived at my country house, my astonishment was excessive when I found General Bernadotte. With him was a little youth whom I did not recognise at first sight, and whom later I discovered to be Madame Bernadotte in boy's clothes. The general told me that he had given much thought as to which retreat he would choose, to give Bonaparte time to cool from his first fit of rage, and he had decided to come to me. He gave me two reasons : firstly, that my chateau, being adjacent to the Forest of Sernat, would enable him and his wife to conceal themselves in the woods with the certainty of not wanting means of living ; and secondly because he knew that I would keep his secret. I thanked him for giving us the preference, and assured him that his confidence would be entirely justified."

And so indeed it was. In this strange hiding-place Desirée suffered mental torture. She had, probably unconsciously, been a party to her husband's downfall. In her heart she had always admired the noble qualities of her husband, but all the excitement in Paris, all the thrills of Julie's parties and the intensity of the brothers-in-law—all these things had turned her head, and she had worked against her husband. He knew it and she knew it, and there was nothing to be said. She had done wrong and now she was getting her punishment. She missed her baby. She was in a strange house which was unnatural to her. She was in boy's clothes, which she abominated.

"I have been a little fool. I should never have listened to the talk of those two men. Oh, my husband, how can you ever forgive me ? I will only give you my word that never, never again will I take any part in politics, and I am quite sure that my sister feels the same."

Bernadotte was in a state of deep depression. Only a couple of months previously he had been basking in the sunlight of a happy home, an important position and the fixed knowledge that he was at the threshold of a brilliant career. It seemed that the dizzy heights were within his range and that he had only to stretch forth his hand to obtain them. But now he was discouraged and disappointed : he could only see himself as a man who was discredited by all.

And thus he spent his time, alternating between two views. Had he been knocked out in the first round ? Or had he been merely stunned, with the possibility of a second and a better chance ? It was very difficult to say. But even at the height of his depression, he could always console himself with the thought that he had done the right thing in maintaining a strict adherence to his own principles, following the old-fashioned formula that in the long run the qualities of uprightness and virtue will always prevail.

The Bernadottes remained in Sazzarin's house for three days, and then, following the advice and assurances of Joseph and Julie, they returned to The Cradle and nobody molested them in any way. On the day after their arrival they were enabled to see the first result of the "coup," and to Bernadotte it was just as ironical as it was unexpected. It was in the shape of a personal visit from Lucien, the man who, above all others, had been responsible for his defeat and discomfiture after Brumaire.

"It is kind of you, Lucien, to come and see me. I cannot help thinking that I must be the laughing-stock of all my friends."

"You have nothing to be ashamed of. You stuck to your principles

and should be proud of yourself. I am the one that is the world's biggest idiot."

"You, Lucien? What on earth do you mean by that?"

"Look here, I am a patriotic Frenchman, just like you are. I think I know that brother of mine better than you do. That fellow has an ambition that knows no bounds. He is all for himself and himself alone. I have just been one of his dupes. If he were to do something foolish, or if his good luck were to desert him, where would we be? I mean ourselves, who are his brothers and sisters. We would be the first to suffer."

"I am afraid that not many would agree with you, Lucien."

"You are wrong, Bernadotte. We—that is, my brothers and sisters—are all agreed on this point. Not Joseph, of course, but he is only a lackey, anyhow. The rest of us hold the same view, and I know that I for one would far rather be on your side than with him."

"That may be your personal view. But what about the people? What about the army? They are all intoxicated with their devotion for this man. If you allied yourself to me, Lucien, you would find that you have no public following at all."

"There you are wrong again. Believe me, Paris is far more intrigued and interested in you than in my brother. They all know that you fought, and they have christened you the Obstacle Man. They are wondering what your next move is going to be."

Incredible as it may appear, Lucien's words were perfectly true. Paris had gone wild with delight after Brumaire, and was delighted at the thought at coming under the sway of one man. But a reaction had already set in, and Paris wanted to know more about the Obstacle Man. It showed itself in many letters of congratulation from all kinds of strangers—including the Bonaparte family—and Bernadotte found himself in a position of embarrassment at this new-found and wholly unexpected popularity. This was particularly the case with the Bonaparte family with Joseph and Julie, with Pauline and Leclerc, with Lucien and Christine. The other Bonapartes—Louis, Caroline, Eliza and Jerome—did not belong to the Julie-Desirée coterie.

It is interesting to quote the remarks made by Desirée on the above Bernadotte-cum-Lucien conversation: "A few days after Brumaire, Lucien paid a personal call on Napoleon, in the hopes of receiving some praise or recognition for the part he had played on that occasion. On seeing him there, Napoleon flew into a rage and told him, among other things, that Christine was ill-bred and not worthy of the name of Bonaparte. Lucien was very angry and walked out of his house."

The embarrassment of Bernadotte was as nothing compared to the surprise of Napoleon, who had not foreseen this unexpected turn of popular favour towards his rival. But it did not worry him very much. He knew that he was the Jack in Office, and that all his Brumaire adversaries could be easily appeased by means of flattering words and lucrative emoluments. A good job, he argued, with a large salary attached to it, would inevitably smooth away all political differences.

Thus, the first task of the new Consulate was to conciliate their fallen enemies with the offer of good appointments. These were all quickly and avidly filled, with just one exception, which was Bernadotte himself. He refused everything that was offered, until, finally, after a couple of months, he was offered a post on the State Council, almost exactly corresponding to the modern Chief of the Imperial General Staff. It was the very post that he had wanted before all others, for

it gave him virtual command of the army, and brought him back to the Ministry of War. Once back in that building he proceeded to indulge in all the peculiar antics that had given colour to his previous Ministry. He was soon to find that those antics did *not* pay, and that he did *not* command the army, simply and solely owing to the fact that his political boss was no longer Barras, but Napoleon. The friction between these two men increased with each day, and the main cause was that Bernadotte insisted that the main purpose of the army was defence, while Napoleon insisted that it should be attack.

The complications caused through the Bernadotte-Bonaparte friction were exemplified in the first social function of the new century. If there was one general in the army that Bernadotte particularly detested, that general was Joachim Murat. And if there was one woman in the Bonaparte family that Desirée disliked more than any other, it was Caroline. Early in January, 1800, the wedding took place between these two people. Bernadotte played the part of best man to Murat, while Desirée played hostess to Caroline!

The situation was altered by matters of greater importance than family bickerings. The British fleet was showing signs of great activity in the Channel, and there were strong rumours that England was about to land on the west coast of France. To counter this action, Napoleon raised and despatched a strong force to Brittany, which was placed under the command of Bernadotte. By this move he rid himself of the obstacle in the War Ministry, after which he led forth an army of his own with the object of regaining the lost Provinces of Italy.

The campaign that followed, directed against the Austrians, is one of the quickest and shortest in the history of warfare. On the face of it, this campaign was a rash undertaking with very little chance of success. The decisive battle was fought at Marengo, and the day went badly for the French Army. Indeed, there was a time when the Austrian Commander-in-Chief had actually left the battlefield for the purpose of writing up the total annihilation of the French Army. But, hardly was his back turned when a French detachment, under the command of Desaix, turned up "out of the blue" and flung themselves into the affray. At the same time a young French cavalry officer named Kellerman, acting entirely on his own initiative, made a brilliant cavalry charge, which decimated the Austrians, and threw them into confusion. And thus, in a few minutes, the field of Marengo was transformed from a crushing defeat into a brilliant victory for the French Army.

The hero of that day was unquestionably little Kellerman, in the same way that Lucien had been the hero of Brumaire. But it was Napoleon who took all the glory and collected all the laurels: it was also Napoleon who reprimanded any officer who dared to mention the name of Kellerman in regard to that action. Such was the character of Napoleon in victory—a mixture of arrogance and injustice. At the same time it worked. In fact it worked so well that he never once regretted it or tried to alter it.

The victory of Marengo was flashed to Paris, and the capital went mad with delight. At the same time it served to reverse the see-saw situation between Bonaparte and Bernadotte. For the eight months that followed Brumaire, Bernadotte had been in "disgrace," which in this case indicated that he was the idol and darling of Paris. But all that was changed by the victory of Marengo, when the fickle city discarded him and turned all its arc lights on Napoleon. This was

just what the First Consul had wanted, and on his return to Paris he made it quite clear that conciliation with his Brumaire enemies would now cease, and that henceforth he would expect more obedience in all departments.

The victory of Marengo further enabled him to assume a dictatorial attitude. He wanted to know from the Senate what sort of government would have been formed in the event of his defeat, and insisted on knowing the names of such ministers. In reply, he was given a list that included the name of Bernadotte. He referred it to Joseph, who assured him that Bernadotte had never even visited Paris or shown himself in the capital since he had been given the Brittany command. But even that assurance failed to satisfy Napoleon. He called all the members of his family to a meeting and showed them the list. He claimed that Bernadotte was an enemy, and ordered the family to regard him as such. The family took the hint and, with the sole exception of Lucien, turned their backs on Bernadotte and Desirée. At the same time, Joseph, by means of some really remarkable feats of juggling and balancing, managed to remain on good terms with both parties.

Almost immediately afterwards a plot was discovered by the secret police with the object of assassinating Napoleon. Among those arrested was a young artist, who admitted that he had received money from Bernadotte. When the case came before the court, general surprise was caused by Desirée, who insisted on being present and giving evidence. She said that it was true that the artist had visited her house with the object of making a bust of her husband, who was serving in Brittany. She paid for the bust, and indignantly denied that there had ever been the slightest collusion between the artist and her husband. His visits to their house had been purely commercial. On this evidence the whole case collapsed and was allowed to burn out; at the same time it left an ugly impression behind it.

When one considers all the adventures, dangers, romances, rewards and disappointments that formed the life of Bernadotte, it must be admitted that the period between 1800 and 1804 was dull and uneventful. For the most part he was segregated in Brittany along with Augerau, Moreau, and Massena, each of whom had dared to speak disparagingly of the First Consul. At no time was he allowed to come to Paris, where Napoleon was endeavouring to settle the economic and social affairs of France. The outcome of this four-year period was the framing of the Code Napoleon, which still exists in France, almost unaltered, and in the inauguration of the Legion of Honour, which ranks second only to the Victoria Cross as the most coveted distinction that it is possible for any mortal to obtain.

In this period Bernadotte made the acquaintance of two ladies, who were greatly attracted by his manner, appearance and character. The first of these was one of the great hostesses of the day, and considered to be the most beautiful woman of that period. Her name was Madame Récamier. She had introduced herself to him by correspondence, and he had performed many acts of courtesy and kindness towards her. She had even offered him the use of her Parisian home during the days of Brumaire.

Bernadotte's other lady friend was the direct antithesis to Madame Récamier. Her name was Madame de Staël, and she was more interested in literature than her personal appearance. She had written inspired words of praise and adulation when the star of Napoleon first appeared in the skies. But as time went on she changed her views and became his

most violent critic. She became an enthusiastic follower of Bernadotte, whom she described as "the living image of the great Condé—fearless alike in battlefield and debating house." She heaped words of praise and flattery over him, making it appear as though she was acting as his personal publicity agent.

It is hardly necessary to remark that Bernadotte treated her flattering words with coldness and indifference. He probably preferred the description of himself as given by Sieyes, "A man with the beak of a vulture and the mind of a thrush."

The beginning of 1804 found him in a trifling "flare up" with Desirée. It started with a letter that he had written to her, complaining that she was not paying enough attention to her figure, and that she should go and have lessons in dancing and deportment. This advice was repeated in many subsequent letters, making it appear that it had become an obsession with him. Desirée strongly resented these remarks and wrote him a sharp letter, informing him that she was no longer a child and refused to be ordered about by him or anybody else.

Another letter written at this period to Joseph contained the words "I stubbornly refuse to lay aside by Jacobin principles, but I have made up my mind that the most profitable service I can render to France lies in the service of Napoleon."

Napoleon was delighted to read these sentiments, and promptly wrote back: "You see that the nation has declared for me, but at the same time she needs the co-operation of all her children. The question is: Will you march forward with France, or do you still prefer to hold apart?" To this Bernadotte replied: "I cannot promise you affection, but I am willing to promise a loyal co-operation and you will see that I shall keep my word."

A few weeks later, Napoleon created eighteen Marshals of France, and Bernadotte was one of their number. At the public presentation of the eighteen batons, each of the new marshals was called upon to speak a few words of gratitude and respect to their chief. There was a general hush of expectation when Bernadotte approached the dais, and all wondered what he would say. Here are his very words:—

"I thought for a time, Sire, that France could not be happy under any but a Revolutionary form of Government. To the sincerity of this conviction Your Majesty must attribute my conduct over the past three years. Enlightened by experience, I feel much satisfaction in informing you that my illusions are now dissipated. I beg of you to be persuaded of my eagerness to execute any measures that Your Majesty may prescribe for the good of the country.

"I moreover declare to you as well as to all my friends here present, that I share the sentiments that General Murat has just delivered to you, in the name of the army. And I do so in no mere formal and verbal way, but with my whole heart and soul."

Napoleon, who had been standing in his favourite pose, with his hands clasped behind his back, now came forward. His face was lit up with a radiant smile, and he grasped Bernadotte by the hand.

"General," he said, "the firm persuasion which I entertain that your tongue has been the faithful interpreter of your heart, renders the avowal which you have had the goodness to make of infinite value to me. It is only by a thorough union of our highest and noblest forces that we can hope to complete the glory, the tranquillity, and the prosperity of France. I beg you, therefore, General, that you will henceforth consider me as your friend as well as your Emperor."

Napoleon did not deign to answer the laudatory and flattering speeches of any of the other new marshals. And so, for this time at any rate, it can be reasonably taken for granted that he had really meant what he said.

CHAPTER XII

JOSEPH IN EXCELSIS

If the three years between 1800 and 1804 were comparatively uneventful for Bonaparte and Bernadotte, they were certainly not so for Joseph. As a result of his success in Genoa, he became Foreign Minister to the Consulate and, as far as France was concerned, he played his part extremely well. The house in Mortefontaine became world-famous for treaties and conferences, while the name of Joseph became a pseudonym of diplomatic victory and success.

Joseph was born in Corsica in the year previous to the subjugation of that island by the French. Thus it is seen that he was the only member of his family who was not a French subject by birth. He was barely seventeen years old when his father died, and it was not till five years later that he received his first regular appointment as a clerk in the Corsican Civil Service. The salary was small, but every penny of it was handed to his mother to help to maintain her huge family. Long before leaving Corsica, Joseph had undertaken the task of both father and breadwinner to this unattractive crowd. In those days the Bonaparte family was convinced that Joseph had a very great career in front of him.

The French Government was generous to the newly-acquired territory, and offered Military Academy education to those islanders who were willing to join the French Army. Joseph would have liked to avail himself of this offer, but was prevented owing to his not being a French subject. The opportunity was thus passed to his second brother, Napoleon, who up till then had been regarded as the most backward of the family and the least likely to succeed.

It thus came about that Napoleon was the first of the family to leave his native land, while Joseph stayed behind in control of his brothers and sisters. In 1792, when Joseph was barely twenty-five years old, the French Government renounced the island, and Joseph brought over the whole family by sea to Marseilles. Here he managed to obtain various clerical posts for himself, and would probably have passed through life as a junior accountant if it had not been for the red-letter day when he met Desirée at the Maison Commune.

At that time the family had been in Marseilles for less than a year, and they were all living in extreme poverty and discomfort. Joseph's marriage to Julie provided a windfall of prosperity for them all. It also marked, as we have seen, the turning-point in Napoleon's career. The latter did not begin to see real money till he became the Inspector-General of Artillery in the Southern Army, but once he had obtained this post, he came to Joseph's assistance by providing education for the three brothers—Lucien, Louis and Jerome. The generosity of both Joseph and Napoleon at this time was badly needed, and entitles both to the very greatest credit.

During the Italian War, Joseph frequently visited his brother at the front, and acted for him as a sort of publicity agent in Paris. Later

in the war he became Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary at the Court of Rome. He took up his residence in Genoa, where he was joined by Julie, Desirée, and later, by Madame Clary as well. This appointment was stated to be necessitated for the strange reason "that Napoleon wanted a man at the Vatican who would solicit the Pope in helping to smooth over the differences between the Royalists and Republicans in France." Joseph seems to have performed his duties remarkably well, and would no doubt have continued to do so, if it had not been for the untimely assassination of Duphot, who has been described in a previous chapter as one of Desirée's suitors.

This unfortunate affair brought Joseph's mission to an abrupt conclusion, and he returned to Paris, where he was elected to the Council of Five Hundred as representative for Corsica. In the Egyptian campaign he again acted as his brother's publicity agent, at the same time furnishing him with a correct and up-to-date commentary of the day-to-day events in the homeland. It is not certain, although it is quite possible, that he may have advised his brother on the date of the latter's return. If that was the case, it can be described as a stroke of genius on the part of Joseph.

The complications that ensued through the Bonaparte-Clary-Bernadotte marriages were handled by him with great skill and adroitness. In the events leading up to Brumaire he had made full use of Desirée without losing the respect or confidence of Bernadotte. In a similar way he had used Lucien with devastating effect at Brumaire. And when all this is taken into consideration, it is hardly surprising that Napoleon was heard to refer to his elder brother as the diplomat *par excellence*. But the position of glory which Joseph attained between 1800 and 1804 make all these successes appear as trifling and insignificant.

In 1800 (the year of Marengo) Joseph presided over a conference whose object was to conclude a Treaty of Peace and Commerce between France and the United States. Three American delegates arrived, and proceeded to explain the American definition of the word Liberty. It transpired that this rather beautiful word had two distinct meanings for the French and the Americans: two meanings that were very similar but by no means identical. To the Frenchmen of that day the word Liberty signified the right to rob and plunder their principal benefactors who were the aristocrats. To the Americans the word Liberty signified the right to rob and plunder their principal pioneers and benefactors, who were the British people. The conference in Julie's house was convened in order to discover some means whereby the word could be made to play its part against the Giant Corsair—the common enemy of both countries. It might be thought that this was so simple that an agreement would soon be reached. But the loquacity of these six men was so prolonged that it took six months before the final agreement was reached. It was decided that from henceforth any British property discovered on board a French or American vessel would be legally and ruthlessly confiscated.

In the following year Joseph was busy in drafting and procuring a treaty between France and Austria. A year later came the notorious Treaty of Amiens, the most contemptible treaty ever signed by an Englishman.

It was England's reply of assent and surrender to all those of her people who were calling out "Peace with Bonaparte." England was undergoing a peace racket of abnormal proportions. Shady politicians

were openly talking about handing over the Empire "as a gesture of friendship and good-will." By this Treaty of Amiens, England recognised the conquests of Napoleon, including his annexation of Belgium, Italy and a part of Austria. Worse than that, she abjured all her rights in Cape Colony, the West Indies, and Ceylon, while the island of Malta was handed to its Ancient Knights. She also handed to Napoleon the district of Hanover, which had been under the Crown of England since the accession of George the First. Worse still, the chief British delegate at this humiliating conference was none other than Lord Cornwallis, who had achieved notoriety by surrendering an entire British army during the American Revolutionary War.

When the clauses of the Peace of Amiens were divulged, the French people could scarcely believe them. Paris was stunned, France bewildered. The arguments used before the invasion of Egypt were now repeated, and seemed to be fully justified at last. But over and above all, the people realised with pride and pleasure that in Joseph they possessed a statesman who could give them diplomatic victories as worthy as those of his brother on the battlefield.

At the beginning of 1804 there were whispers throughout France that the country was to be given a new regime, and that the First Consul would assume the Crown of France and become Emperor. These rumours received verification in the summer of that year, when the eighteen Marshals of France were created who, on receipt of their batons, addressed themselves to Napoleon as Your Majesty for the first time. From that day a completely new order of precedence was created in view of the forthcoming coronation.

In this new order, Joseph received the title of Grand Elector of the French Empire. His main task was to superintend and create the duties of the other new members of the Royal Household. These were that Napoleon himself should be recognised as Emperor: that his brothers should all become Imperial Princes and their wives Imperial Princesses, thereby becoming official members of the Royal Family: that the eighteen Marshals should become the recognised aristocracy of France and that their wives were to assume the title of Madame la Maréchale. Finally, the most important point of all was that in the event of the Emperor's demise without male issue, the Crown of France should pass to his eldest brother. Thus Joseph became Second Gentleman, and Julie Second Lady on the Continent of Europe.

The elevation of Joseph and Julie to these positions was the prelude to much family bickering, culminating in an unpleasant rupture between the two eldest brothers. In the first place the trouble sprang from Josephine herself, whose daughter, Hortense, had by this time become the wife of Louis. Josephine urged Louis to press the claims of his little son to be the heir to the throne, thinking that her own position would thus be assured as being the grandmother of a future Emperor. The second problem was presented by Lucien, who had recently lost his wife and was about to marry again. He was warned that the lady whom he had intended as his second wife did not find favour with Napoleon. He, however, chose to ignore fraternal criticism and married the lady, whereupon he and his family were immediately outlawed from France and forced to take refuge in Italy. The third problem was that of Joseph himself, who openly complained that his great services on all those international conferences had been grossly underrated.

He further claimed that his appointment as Grand Elector was a poor and unsatisfactory reward for his services to France. All that

he had to do was to preside over an occasional Senate on such trivial matters as dress and formality on public occasions. But his main duty—to which he took strong exception—was to keep a careful watch on personal obstacles like Bernadotte, and in particular to listen and report on all the petty intrigues in the inner circle of his own family.

All these reasons may appear to be of little consequence, but they became greatly magnified as coronation day approached. On all such days the question of precedence becomes unduly exaggerated, and they frequently lead to bitter acrimony and even to open war. It is a good thing, a very good thing, that the general public is usually kept in the dark regarding all the catfights behind such scenes. But so it is at every coronation, regal or episcopal. Even in Westminster Abbey there have been some very unpleasant incidents.

When the preliminary orders for Napoleon's coronation were drafted and given out, Joseph disappeared from the scene and indulged in a fit of sulks. He poured forth all his troubles to Julie, who was, on the whole, sympathetic towards him, and disliked the whole idea of the coronation. Her reasons for doing so were very different from those of her husband. This lady, now an Imperial Princess, was intensely religious, and her point was that Josephine had no right to take part in any coronation ceremony owing to her lack of moral scruples. "If that woman," she said, "is to be crowned as Empress, it will be an insult to every virtuous woman in France."

Joseph was greatly impressed by this idea, and decided to bring it to the notice of his brother. It was a brave decision, for Napoleon was passing through a period of scorn and rage. Everybody had noticed the growing imperial temper, the merciless rebuffs and retorts that were being daily handed to his juniors, the violent fits of anger that left him in deep perspiration. Joseph knew all this, and in spite of it all, he decided that he would beard the lion in his own den. He had worked out his part and decided to put it to the test.

"I have come to make it known to you," and the voice of Joseph was both firm and provocative, "that my wife and I refuse to take part in the coronation ceremony unless—unless Josephine is excluded."

He waited for the torrent of rage, but it did not come. Instead of that the Emperor merely looked at him with a half smile on his face. "You," he muttered and paused. "You—Joseph," he repeated, and surely there was never given so much contempt to this little word of three letters "You. . . ." Then, suddenly, the voice lifted to the rasping, incisive tenor. "And why do *you* talk to me of *your* rights and *your* interests? Which one of us is it that has won the laurels? Who is it that deserves the power? You might as well pretend to me that you have slept with my mistress or intend to do so soon. Look here, Joseph, Power is my mistress, and I defy you to touch her. People all round me are exasperating me, trying to make me a tyrant. But I am not a tyrant, and there is only one thing that can make me a tyrant, and that is a movement from *you* or any member of *your* family."

"But, brother, you realise that if Josephine were to die, you would be accused of poisoning her." He had rehearsed these words, but the remark was not nearly as effective as he had thought it would be.

"What may happen to the Empress is nothing to do with you. Now go along, back to your work. I have nothing more to say. Go."

And Joseph went. The interview had not gone as he had hoped. He admitted afterwards that Bernadotte would have done it better,

but Bernadotte had promised to co-operate, and Joseph had no desire to annex for himself the part of Obstacle Man. He called his brothers and told them what had happened, but neither Louis or Jerome had any suggestions to make. They decided to let things take their own course.

The three sisters were also very much annoyed. They shared with Julie a strong dislike towards Josephine, but it would have been the height of absurdity for any of them to have presented Julie's reason for her exclusion. Their main complaint was that they had not been created Imperial Princesses. That distinguished title was only being given to two women—Julie and Hortense—as being the wives of Joseph and Louis—and the sisters thought that the title should have been extended so as to include themselves.

It was of course the main duty of the Grand Elector to pacify these haggling women, and Joseph made a great effort to do so. It cannot be said that he was rewarded with success. He was only met with ugly words, merciless chatter, and the very lowest forms of mud-slinging and back-biting. The whole family was in it, with the exception of Bernadotte and Desirée, who held proudly aloof.

Thus passed the few months which comprised the election of the Marshals and the coronation of the Emperor.

CHAPTER XIII

VIVE L'EMPEREUR !

JUST before the coronation there occurred the death of a lady who has already fluttered through the pages of this story and then disappeared into oblivion. This was Suzanne, the wife of Etienne Clary, whose visit with Desirée to the Maison Commune had been responsible for the developments that had opened up such absorbing prospects for the two families.

This lady, who was the mother of seven children, had become known to Madame Mère—the name given to Napoleon's mother—who had become greatly attached to her. In order to try to conciliate the recalcitrant Lucien, Madame Mère had gone over to Italy with Suzanne, where the latter contracted an illness from which she rapidly succumbed. Madame Mère was heart-broken and decided to remain with Lucien, thereby missing all the coronation festivities.

It was just as well she did so, for she was spared the anguish of watching the developments of Joseph's troubles. After his failure to get Josephine excluded, the Emperor called for him and gave instructions that the two Royal Highnesses, Julie and Hortense, were to combine with his own three sister, Elisa, Pauline and Caroline, in carrying the train of the Empress during the church ceremony. When Joseph retailed those instructions to the ladies concerned, he was answered with torrents of abuse.

"I won't do it," said Eliza. "I refuse to do such a thing. I am an Imperial Princess, and, as sister to the Emperor, I flatly refuse to touch anything that belongs to that odious woman. You can go to the Emperor, Joseph, and repeat to him exactly what I have told you."

"I have already told him all that, but he simply refuses to listen to a word that I say." There were tears in his eyes and tears in his voice

as he continued. "You know my views on the subject, which are exactly the same as your own. But he insists that you *must* carry the thing."

"And I am not going to touch it, either," said Caroline. "Do you think that my husband, the leading Marshal in the Imperial Army, would stand aside and watch his wife, an Imperial Princess, being debased? Being forced to appear in public as the maidservant of that old woman! Who is she, anyhow? She ought to go back to the gutter where she rightly belongs."

"That is just what I think, Caroline," whimpered Joseph, "and I agree with every word you say. He has no right to debase you. But what can I do? They are his orders, not mine. Why blame me?"

"Look here, Joseph," said Hortense, "you have no right to allow that woman to say that my mother comes from the gutter. She is the Empress of France, and she was a Vicomtesse while you were all Corsican street urchins. You seem to forget that she is my mother as well as being the first woman in the Empire."

"Really, Hortense, I did not mean to offend you. Of course, Josephine is the Empress, and it is only right that she should have a train for her coronation. But somebody has got to carry it—that's all. I can't see why you are all making such a fuss about it."

Joseph had never been addressed in such a manner by any of the distinguished delegates from England or America on those conferences where he had been such a shining success. He was shocked at the language of these Imperial Princesses—who were not princesses at all—and he decided to report their words and behaviour to the Emperor. This only brought along another thunderbolt.

"Listen to me, Joseph. If these women will not obey you, it is clear that you have no right to be Grand Elector of France. I may be forced to remove you from that position. That would mean you would have to leave the Luxemburg Palace. As for the women, if they insist on that idiotic cackle, you must instruct the firms to cancel the order for their coronation dresses."

These words cut deep into the breast of Joseph. Since the proclamation of the Empire, he and Julie had left Mortefontaine and moved to the Luxemburg Palace, which was the traditional residence of the heirs to the French throne. The thought made him feel very humble. And when he repeated the last part to his sisters, he observed that they also melted considerably. Pauline, in particular, did not want to lose an opportunity which might make her "the chief bridesmaid of the party."

Traditionally speaking, the Bonaparte sisters were in the right, for it was only in the most exceptional cases that any Queen of France had been crowned at a religious ceremony. Napoleon was well aware of that, but it gave him delight to flounce tradition, and at the same time bring his family to heel.

He adopted the same manner towards the Pope, who had accepted his invitation to come to Paris for the ceremony. It was notable that in the past many kings had been crowned by Popes, but they had always been forced to go to Rome for their coronations. It was a break in tradition—a break that never happened before or since—for the Pope to leave Rome and perform the ceremony in a foreign capital.

There were many reasons why Napoleon was anxious for the Pope to perform the religious rites of the coronation. First, there was the example of his own superiority in forcing the old man to break tradi-

tion in the trouble and inconvenience of that long journey ; secondly, the French Royalists, most of whom were good Churchmen, would see for themselves that there was nothing anti-christian in the new Empire ; thirdly, and this was most important, the Jacobins and Royalists and other anti-Imperialists were conducting all their underground activities in Rome. Napoleon was burning to punish the complaisance of the authorities in Rome for allowing such things to take place.

The negotiations with Rome provided clear indications of the Emperor's intentions. The ceremony was arranged to take place in Notre Dame on the 9th of November—exactly five years after Brumaire. The Pope was ordered to be in Paris by November the 3rd, which gave him only thirty-three days to make his arrangements, appoint his retinue, provide for the Church in his absence, and choose all the places on the route where he would scatter benedictions. Naturally, he protested that the time was much too short. He was given a peremptory note to the effect that the French delegation to receive him had already been appointed, that their carriages had started, and that the people were awaiting him with expectancy. In this letter the Pope did not fail to notice the imperial tone, and called a meeting of his cardinals to decide whether he should cancel the acceptance. The cardinals explained that they did not want to see another looting French army at the gates of the Vatican. Further, they believed that a French army was about to spring at the throat of Britain, and thus, they considered that the hand of friendship should be extended to the man who was about to humiliate the Pagan Isle.

And so it was decided that the visit should take place, and the Pope departed with a huge retinue, consisting of six cardinals, four archbishops, six prelates, and a vast cavalcade of surgeons, coachmen, grooms, chefs and other menials. It was not till the 2nd of December that they reached the French capital, and even then there was not a single French official to greet them ! Instead of that, the Emperor dressed himself up as one of a hunting party in a forest and prepared to show his guests that the arrival of a Pope in his capital was just a passing and ordinary incident—nothing more.

Thus, when the Papal carriage arrived, it was ordered to stand and wait, so that the Emperor might be informed. The holy man was kept shivering on a cold, chilly, rainy, cheerless afternoon until it suited the convenience of the Emperor to go and greet him. This was done in a casual, "Hallo, old chappie" kind of attitude. The Pope was then made to leave his carriage and walk across some particularly muddy ground, till he reached that of Napoleon, after which they both drove together to the Palace. That evening he was the chief guest at a dinner party of distinguished people, including Joseph and Julie.

The Pope received another shock when he learned that Josephine had not been married according to Roman customs. It appeared that Napoleon had always insisted on religious marriages for his brothers and sisters, but had steadfastly avoided it for himself. Up to the present he had never wanted a divorce, but there was always in his mind the thought that such a thing might some day become necessary, and for that reason he preferred a legal to a religious marriage. The Pope made it clear that he could not take part in any coronation service "if the Emperor insisted on the presence of his concubine."

Napoleon ignored his remark. Time was much too short for lengthy arguments on such trivial details. Now that the Pope had arrived, the

first thing to do was to teach him his part. It was most important that rehearsals should commence at once.

New problems promptly arose. First, who was to place the crown on the Emperor's head? In his original acceptance the Pope had insisted that he should do so, but now there appeared to be objections. It was obvious that Napoleon had never considered the show as a religious service at all, but just as a military investment. He was, however, willing to concede this point to the Pope. Then came the question of the orb. This jewel was an old symbol of the Roman Church and a relic of the far-distant days when Romanism ruled the world. But the orb had also for centuries past been used in British coronations, when it was handed to the sovereign as a reminder to uphold Christianity which "dominates the world." It had not been used in any other country. And now, for this coronation, the Pope was ordered to bless and then hand to the Emperor an orb, using the same Latin words as used in papal coronations. The suggestion was utterly preposterous, but the Pope by this time was tired of protesting and decided to let it pass.

Lastly, there was the request from the Pope himself. Like all his predecessors, he was fond of being carried about in a chair by distinguished prelates and under a rich, silken canopy. Napoleon naturally was not going to suffer any such absurdity at his coronation, and the request was refused "on account of the narrowness of the passage through which he must pass; because it was unusual in France; and because in the past the same honour had been paid to one of the most hated men in the Revolution."

The above are only a few of the complications that had to be settled before coronation day. The troubles all seemed to come from two directions, which were the Vatican Prelate and the Bonaparte family. The pitch and strain of the situation would have shattered the nerves of an ordinary man. Hardly a day passed without a message from either the Pope or the Grand Elector that they would be unable to attend the ceremony. But Napoleon was not an ordinary man, and he treated these two enemies with supreme, unspeakable contempt.

(The situation might be compared to the rehearsals of a modern revue at the Casino or the Folies Bergere. The bitterness, jealousy and back-biting on such occasions are so acid and so ugly that it always looks as if the whole show would be a fiasco. But in spite of the threats of every Parisian revue artist to resign, the curtain on the opening night invariably goes up, and the show is seldom a failure. So it was with Napoleon's coronation.)

On the 4th of December, it took place. At nine o'clock on that morning the Pope's procession moved off. It consisted of a number of carriages containing vague grand officers of Rome and Paris. At the end of them came the carriage of the Pope, an eight-in-hand drawn by dapple-grey horses with plumed crests and twisted manes. The Pope, clad simply in white, was clearly visible through the eight windows of the gilded coach. Above his head was a triple crown, supported by four gilded doves. On his right was a French Colonel, the Emperor's Equerry. After them came the usual carriages of nondescripts, and, last of all, a squadron of dragoons in magnificent uniforms.

The crowd was worked up to a high pitch of coronation exuberance. None of them thought of kneeling or grovelling before the prelate, but all smiled at him as being part of the entertainment. According to his custom he lifted his fingers and gave benedictions, which the onlookers

ignored. The people of Paris were by no means unanimous in their support of the Roman Church, and some of them were seen to disapprove of his gesture. When he arrived at Notre Dame, he entered the Church in procession, and then sat down and disposed himself for a long, long wait.

At ten o'clock a salvo of artillery announced that the Emperor had departed from the Tuileries. It took a longer time than anticipated for the second procession to reach the cathedral owing to the narrowness of the streets and the inadequacy of the police in controlling the crowd. At the head of this procession rode the glittering figure of Murat; followed by a group of mounted heralds, who were in turn followed by eight carriages bearing celebrities, among whom might have been recognised the faces of Talleyrand and Berthier.

Then followed the imperial coach, drawn by eight bay horses with white plumes. Four allegorical figures upheld the roof, which was surrounded by a crown on a golden altar between four eagles. In front and on the sides were branches of laurels surrounding a coroneted N. On the lower part of the doors was a garland of oak enclosing a crown of sixteen stars, with that of the Legion of Honour in the centre.

Inside the carriage sat four people. On the right was the Emperor in a dress of purple velvet, embroidered with gold and glittering with precious stones; on his left was the Empress, smiling, bowing and looking less than twenty-five years old; there were diamonds glistening from her neck and from her belt. On the seat in front sat Joseph, the Grand Elector, in flame-colour velvet; and by his side was Louis, the Constable, dressed in deep blue. They arrived at the cathedral at eleven o'clock, and retired temporarily to array themselves for the ceremony.

And now the Empress Josephine was allowed a respite which must have been the envy of every woman present, and indeed of every woman of all ages. She went into the robing room for the finishing touches. Outside were waiting an imperious and impatient Emperor, a Pope, a vast crowd of marshals, generals, ambassadors, aristocrats, democrats, plutocrats—apart from the papal satellites. And all of them were impatient, but still they were all forced to wait, for what? To wait on the convenience of Josephine, *who was powdering her nose*.

At last the feminine toilet was completed and the procession started. A place of prominence had been reserved for the Maréchales, and Desirée was amongst them. She saw the ushers, followed by the glittering heralds. Then came the Regalia of the Empress, attended by various marshals dressed in coats of blue velvet, lined with white satin. Then after an effective gap came the glittering figure of Murat carrying the crown of the Empress on a cushion. (The Murats were the deadliest enemies of the Empress, and here was one of them playing the part of menial-in-chief to her!) After him came the Empress herself with her flowing mantle held up by Julie, Hortense, Elisa, Pauline and Caroline. This scene was so entrancingly lovely that it literally dazzled the sight of the spectators. Desirée described it as "far the loveliest thing I ever saw in my whole life." Indeed, the Empress had not wasted her time in the robing room. As the leading figure in that bevy of beauty, she smote the heart of everybody present.

Slowly this procession passed, and then something even more important took its place. She saw the imperial regalia, borne by the more personal and intimate of the new marshals. There was Victor Beauharnais carrying the ring on a cushion, and close by him was old

Berthier carrying the orb. And then, towering above the others, with nose protruding and eyes flashing, came her own man, the father of her own child. Never before had Bernadotte looked so splendid as he did then, attired in white satin vest and breeches, covered with a huge mantle and carrying a cushion on which rested the chain of the Legion of Honour. Then came Kellermann, the hero of Marengo, bearing the sword of Charlemagne. Last of all came the Emperor himself, attended by Joseph and Louis.

The ceremony was noted for two incidents. After the Pope had given the holy command at the most important moment of the day, he took the crown in his hands and held it over the head of the Emperor. He was on the point of lowering it when Napoleon threw up his hands, grasped it, turned about so that he faced the congregation, and then lowered it gently on to his brow. This was done in direct contradiction to what had been arranged. It signified that the Emperor insisted on taking the crown, donning it and wearing it, and that the assistance of the Pope was not wanted.

After crowning himself he signalled to Josephine to mount the steps and receive her crown at his hands. She did so, and just as she was about to put her foot on the top step, she was seen to stagger and reel: in fact she very nearly fell backwards. Desirée was in a position to see what had happened. The sisters were having their revenge, and had chosen that moment to let the train slip out of their hands. Only Hortense and Julie held on to it long enough to receive male assistance. Not till then did the Empress advance and obtain the crown at the hands of her husband.

After crowning the Empress, Napoleon bent down and whispered in her ear: "What would little Raguideaux say if he could see us now?" Little Raguideaux was the solicitor who had told Josephine before her marriage that Napoleon had nothing but his sword and his cloak. At the close of the ceremony he turned to Joseph and remarked in a loud enough voice, "What would our father say if he saw us now?"

The imperial coach was cheered vociferously on its return to the Tuileries. The air was rent with enthusiastic shouts of "*Vive . . . Vive . . . Vive l'Empereur.*" Napoleon was delighted to see that he ruled the hearts as well as the persons of his beloved Paris.

Desirée and Bernadotte did not return home till late that evening. The surpassing loveliness of it all had made her feel very tired, and she was still in a kind of trance when the door opened and Pauline was announced. This lady was loth to take off her coronation dress, and had come especially to show it to Desirée. It was indeed a lovely sight with the long white sleeves embroidered with gold; her collar was of lace, with a head-dress of white plumes, while her aigret, necklace and earrings were studded with diamonds. Desirée was enraptured. Outside, the crowd was shouting *Vive l'Empereur*, and everything was satisfactory in the Bernadotte house.

In another house an angry prelate was fuming with rage at the humiliation that he had been forced to endure. He had made a long and arduous journey to a foreign capital in order to play the leading part at a coronation ceremony. But the part turned out to be not a leading part or even a minor part, but just that of an accessory, a piece of furniture. No one had ever treated a Pope like that before—not even Henry the Eighth. He was very angry.

In the Palais de Luxemburg the atmosphere was strained. There was nobody to tell Julie how nice she had looked and if there had been,

she would not have believed them. In her mind this beautiful day had been completely ruined by the appalling behaviour of the sisters in dropping the train. Joseph was in a fit of sulks. He also had been publicly humiliated. He was quite willing to act as brother to the Emperor, but not as valet to him. "Paris," he argued, "is not big enough to hold us both; one of us will have to go, and I hope it will be myself." But Paris at that moment was not interested in Joseph. Paris was singing, dancing, carousing and shouting "*Vive l'Empereur.*"

At the Tuileries Napoleon was in excellent form. He had already smashed the Austrian and Italian armies in pitched battle. He had eliminated Barras, tamed Bernadotte, and outlawed Lucien. He had also had a successful day. He had made a fool of the Pope and he had taught his family a lesson they were not likely to forget. In many respects the victory over his family was the greatest of them all, and gave him the greatest pleasure. He was also pleased at hearing the distant cries which penetrated his windows "*Vive l'Empereur . . . Vive . . . Vive l'Empereur.*"

But later in the evening the reaction came. His mind kept asking him "What is the object of it all? To whom am I going to leave it?" And the answer was an awful, terrible blank. He lashed himself into a rage and turned on his wife, blaming her for her sterility, using terrible words. And Josephine fought back. She accused him of impotence, of wasting his substance by committing incest with his sister, Pauline. It was a loathsome scene, charged with spite and venom.

But outside, there was nothing but acclamations, joy, happiness and cries of "*Vive l'Empereur.*"

CHAPTER XIV

BATTLES BY SEA AND LAND

THE coronation of Napoleon must be regarded as the chief culminating point of the career of this remarkable man. Everybody in France knew that for a long time he had been aiming at absolute despotism. The humiliation of the Pope and his own family indicated that he was fully entitled to the power. Paris of course made witty and sarcastic remarks about his family, but nevertheless Paris accepted him as Emperor, and agreed that it was a good move on his part to relegate his relations to their proper positions. Paris believed that he would give similar punishment to his foreign enemies, and that now at last the path to glory was open to her children.

Of the many changes that this man had effected, perhaps the most startling was in the changed relations of the Bonaparte and Clary families towards one another. It has already been noted how greatly the marriage of Joseph and Julie altered the prospects of the Bonapartes. The fortune that she had brought to the penniless man was the starting point of all these sudden and dramatic changes. At that time Madame Clary had been criticised and censured for allowing the marriage to take place at all. Everybody in Marseilles agreed with Napoleon's remark that "that Joseph is a very lucky fellow." But now the same people were thinking differently. Many a female tongue was heard to ask that horrible question "What could such a man have been thinking about, to go and throw himself away on a woman like her?"

With Desirée it was slightly different. Nobody had ever hinted that Bernadotte had married her for her money. He was prudent in his investments, while the long years in the ranks had taught him the value of his sixpences. He was thrifty without being miserly, and was one of those men who could steer a course through life without hazard or hindrance caused by money troubles.

There was not, and indeed there never could have been very much affection between the Bonaparte family and the two Clary girls. The Bonaparte sisters had pestered Julie in the "Hotel Clary" at Marseilles, coming down on her like a swarm of locusts. They had behaved in very much the same way in the Mortefontaine house, and in neither case had Julie tried to stop them. But nothing on earth would induce her to let them pester her again at the Luxemburg Palace. These two sisters were absolutely virtuous, and lived only for one another. That was the keynote of their existence. It will be seen that in many cases they preferred the society of one another to that of their own husbands.

As for Bernadotte, he was in high favour with his chief at the dawn of 1805. Napoleon regarded him with all the joy which, according to the Holy Book, is reserved for the one sinner that repenteth. As soon as the coronation was over, he was one of the very first to be invested with the grand cordon of the Legion of Honour. A fully furnished house in the Rue d'Anjou was given to him by Napoleon in reward for his services. This house had been stolen from Bernadotte's partner in Brumaire, General Moreau, who had incurred the imperial displeasure and had been shipped off to America. Desirée was sorry to leave The Cradle, where her baby had been born, and where so many thrilling incidents had taken place, but the new residences in the Palais de Luxemburg and the Rue d'Anjou were more fitting for the improved social position of both the girls, and had the further advantage of being closer to the hub and heart of Paris.

Bernadotte was not destined to see very much of his new home. The Treaty of Amiens had brought the district of Hanover under French rule, and its people, after over a hundred years of close contact with Great Britain, had learned to be independent, outspoken and extremely critical of their leaders and governors. Such a spirit was far from popular with that of the new Imperial Government, and it became imperative for the Emperor to appoint as Governor a man who would be both just and prudent in his dealings with the population, and at the same time bring them into line with the new order that was being created all over the Continent. There was only one such man among all the military leaders, and his name was Bernadotte.

So Bernadotte took up his post as Governor of Hanover in addition to that of Commander-in-Chief of the left wing of the Grand Army. His administration produced similar results to those he had obtained in Hesse, and numerous stories were told of his personal kindness to the people and the esteem and respect with which they regarded him. At the same time his post was not entirely administrative, for Napoleon was now ready with his plans for the invasion of England.

It must be admitted that La Grande Armée was a very grand army indeed, its leaders being Bernadotte in Hanover, Marmont in Holland, Soult and Lannes at Boulogne, Augereau at Brest, while Murat had complete control over the cavalry. Napoleon was hovering about Boulogne with an imposing array of balloons and flat-bottomed boats, but it was not at all certain whether he really intended to invade or not. One little incident can be mentioned to show that England in war

time does not change much throughout the centuries. An English cartoon arrived in France which served to show up the coarseness and vulgarity of this degraded and uncivilised nation. The Emperor saw it and nearly had an epileptic fit. The cartoon showed the French fleet floating like a lot of nutshells across the Channel. On the top of the white cliffs of Dover an English sailor was seated and blowing them all to perdition *with whiffs from his pipe*.

At the end of August, just eight months after the coronation, the Emperor suddenly struck the Boulogne camp and gave orders to wheel to the right about and face Austria. Thanks to the meticulous staff-work of Berthier, who had carefully prepared the campaign, this order was executed in complete secrecy. The Austrians had no idea of what was happening. They really thought that the Imperial wrath was about to be visited on England.

The object of the new campaign was to capture or destroy a huge army under the command of the Austrian, Mack, who held a strong position at Ulm. In this short campaign Bernadotte played a most important part. Covering and camouflaging his movements with great skill, he withdrew his army from Hanover in the north, leading them to Munich in the south. Then by means of forced marches, he succeeded in crossing the Danube and placing his army in a direct line between Mack and his reserves. It was a most daring manoeuvre. It did not deceive Mack, who believed that his reserves would attack the intruders and annihilate them. But the reserves hesitated to do so, and he suddenly found himself faced with the full weight of the Grand Army. He was in a state of siege. After a few days he surrendered with his whole Army.

Ulm was not a battle : it was something far greater, it was a strategic conquest. Only one small action took place when Ney, acting under Bernadotte, stormed and captured an almost impregnable position. It was the first time that this great warrior's name was brought to the notice of the public, and indeed it was the first time that Ney ever fought under Napoleon. This very brave man had learned all the tricks of attack and defence in the Army of the Sambre and Meuse under the command of Bernadotte and his loyalty and admiration for his first chief proved to be outstanding features in the character of this glorious soldier.

The credit for Ulm was claimed, as usual, by Murat, but it belonged entirely to Bernadotte and Ney. Indeed, Bernadotte might easily have received proper recognition for his work on that day, had it not been for a national setback, a grim and dreadful defeat that befell France. It was only to be compared with that terrible experience in the early days of the Egyptian campaign. On the day after the Battle of Ulm, the Battle of Trafalgar was fought, and all hopes of invading England were immediately frustrated. This great sea battle was described alike by the French and Spanish papers as an outstanding defeat for the English fleet, but these words deceived nobody at all. It was true that the mighty Nelson had fallen. But the awful fact remained that the Giant Corsair was free to rove the seas with perfect liberty and no possible inhibition.

The day had not dawned when the names of Nelson and Ney were to receive recognition from the posterity of their respective enemies. It is no exaggeration to say that the English schoolboy, who often has to plod through many pages of dull and colourless history, invariably responds with animation at the mention of Ney, just as his French

prototype does at the name of Nelson. It is certainly strange that the same curtain that went down on the life of the one should immediately rise to reveal the glory of the other.

The political effects of October, 1805, were duly recognised in both France and England. The latter was heart-broken at the death of her favourite hero, but at the same time she realised that the struggle against Boney was going to be long and bitter. France, on the other hand, made up her mind to accelerate the war on the Continent for the purpose of driving the island empire into a state of isolation. Only five weeks after the Battle of Ulm, another battle was fought on the 2nd of December, 1805, the battle upon which Napoleon prided himself beyond and above all others.

One does not need to be an authority on military matters to understand the Battle of Austerlitz. It is easily comprehensible to the veriest amateur. There were five corps under the Emperor: two on the right, commanded by Lannes and Murat; two in the centre, commanded by Bernadotte and Soult; and one on the left, commanded by Davout. These five marshals were as jealous of one another and just as bitter as the Bonaparte sisters had been against Josephine. On the morning of that day there had been a dog-fight between Lannes and Soult, ending in a challenge to a duel!

The enemy attacked the left wing of the French, and Davout, carrying out his orders, fell back slightly. The enemy also attacked on the right wing, where he was held by means of defensive action by Lannes and Murat. In the centre, however, it was very different. Here, Soult and Bernadotte were most aggressive, delivering a fierce attack and driving the enemy back in the direction of the village of Austerlitz. Soon the Austrian Army became palpably strung out, thereby enabling Napoleon, with both wings intact, to send reinforcements to any part of the battlefield that needed them.

Bernadotte on this occasion was acting in support of Soult, and he bitterly complained that he had not been given enough cavalry. He was compelled to bide his time, and was eventually enabled to push his army through a gap in Soult's line and force the plateau of Pratzenburg, which was an outstanding vantage point. Soon afterwards the two French flanks closed in, and the day ended in a crashing defeat for the Austrian Army, which lost over 30,000 men and 200 guns.

The bickering and back-biting among the marshals after Austerlitz was far greater than after Ulm. Davout complained that Bernadotte had not shown enough energy. Soult complained that Davout was too late. Murat said that Lannes had left him stranded, and Lannes lost his temper. He had already been on the verge of fisticuffs with Soult, and so he decided the only thing for him to do was to leave the battlefield, pack up and go home. It is interesting to note that Soult drew up a long report claiming that the victory was entirely due to him, and suggesting that he ought to be given the title of Duke of Austerlitz.

The news of Austerlitz caused a stir throughout the world, especially in London and Paris. William Pitt, Prime Minister of England, saw his great plans for a European coalition completely shattered. He threw up his hands in despair and uttered the famous remark that has passed to us down the ages: "Roll up the map of Europe. It will not be needed for another ten years."

The despondency in London was in direct contrast to the joy with which the news was received in Paris. The fact that within a

few weeks the Emperor had gained two of the most sparkling victories in military history filled the people with gladness and enthusiasm. Soldiers and all men in uniform were cheered in the streets. Liberal recognition was given to any soldier who was wearing a ribbon or decoration, while officers in carriages who wore the scarlet ribbon of the Legion of Honour were greeted with smiles and whispers of "Voilà un des honorés." This same expression had been used only a short time previously to denote sarcasm and contempt, for the same sound gave the words "Voilà un déshonoré," the difference between them being as "one of the honoured ones" against a "dishonoured one" as conveyed by the tone and attitude that the speaker chose to assume.

The ladies of Paris, such as Caroline and Desirée, received their full quota of recognition alike in the streets and in the drawing-rooms. Those who bore the magic name of Bonaparte became imperial in every sense of the word. Next to the Emperor, the chief topic was about the marshals—their faces, their manners, their careers, their appearance and even their ages. One journal pointed out that at this time Berthier was the eldest, being fifty-two years old; Bernadotte was forty-two, Murat thirty-eight, Mortier thirty-seven, Napoleon thirty-six, Soult thirty-six, Lannes thirty-six, and Davout thirty-five. At the same time the exploits of Ney began to become known to the public and the Empress made up her mind that she would find a wife for him. It was also noticed that Napoleon's two former friends, Junot and Marmont, had had the misfortune to be absent from both these scenes of triumph and glory.

Paris was gay again, and Paris was proud of her Emperor proving such a profitable investment. Meanwhile, in the neighbourhood of the Luxemburg Palace, two sisters passed all their time in one another's company. One of the husbands was away fighting at the front, and the other was helping at home. But nobody could see why Joseph was irritated. The fact is, Joseph wanted a mistress.

But it was not an ordinary mistress that Joseph wanted. He had been recalling and harping on his brother's words. "You might as well pretend to me that you have slept with my mistress or will do so soon. Look here, Joseph, Power is my mistress, and I defy you to touch her. . . ." The successes of Ulm and Austerlitz had been the means of glorifying Napoleon to a ridiculous extent. Joseph was jealous of his brother. Joseph wanted to sleep with his brother's mistress whose name was Power.

"I think it quite possible," he told Desirée, "that the Emperor will make me a king of some place, probably somewhere in Italy. If he does, I shall not hesitate to accept it."

"But, I thought," said Desirée, wickedly, "that he had already offered you a kingdom and you had refused to accept it."

"Oh, yes," said Joseph rather coldly, for he did not like to be reminded of this affair, "but it was nothing. It was only Lombardy. It was at the time of the coronation that he mentioned it, and he only offered it to me because he wanted to get rid of me. The old woman was anxious to get me out of the light so that she could press him to make Hortense's boy heir to the throne of France. But I would not have it. I saw through the scheme and refused to go. I wasn't going to let him catch me."

"The Emperor would never have done it. If he had made that child his heir, all Paris would have said that he and not Louis was the boy's father."

"Yes, yes. I know that now, but I did not know it then. I probably ought to have accepted it. But that is all over now. If he makes me another offer, and I think he will, I shall seize it and then Julie and I will be really important again. I should like to be a king."

"Well, I certainly don't want to go back to Italy," said Julie. "I do not want to see any more corpses brought into my house. No, thank you, Joseph. You can go wherever you like, but I shall remain in Paris."

"That is as you please, Julie. But I refuse to go on living as I am now. When the Emperor is away at war, the whole talk is either Joachim or Caroline or even Bernadotte. I count for nothing. All I do is occasionally to preside over a meeting of a few lawyers. I was made for something better than that. The proper place for me is somewhere abroad, where I shall either be King or governor. These women, these sisters of mine, make me sick. Oh, Julie, what have I done to deserve it?"

"If you will take my advice," said Desirée, "you should wait till that man of mine comes back. He seems to be on very good terms with the Emperor just now, and it would be interesting to hear what he has to say."

Napoleon returned to Paris in time for Christmas, and received the welcome of a conquering King. He was in very good spirits, warmly greeting Joseph and being especially pleasant to the two girls. "You must come and see me to-morrow, Joseph. I have a lot of things to tell you." When the two brothers met, the Emperor was in a confidential mood.

"I am going to divide up my Empire into nations and principalities. You, dear Joseph, shall have a country and be a king. But for the time being you, as Chief Elector, will be responsible for issuing orders to all those who will receive these new appointments. In that way you will see what is expected of them and what is expected from you. And, by the way, Joseph, there will be a number of princesses among the wives of the new governors, and you can give my sisters the title of Imperial Princesses. That is what they want, isn't it?"

"Yes, sire."

Napoleon liked that mode of address, especially when it came from the mouth of his elder brother. He laughed heartily and playfully thumped Joseph on the back.

CHAPTER XV

A PRINCE OF THE EMPIRE

THE early part of 1806 was distinguished for the "new appointments" mentioned in the last chapter, and the titles given by Napoleon to his chiefs as a reward for their services. The first on the list was Joseph, who became King of Naples; the second was Murat, who became Grand Duke of Berg and Cleves; and the third was Berthier, who became Prince of Neuchâtel. There were also titles for the three sisters, Pauline becoming Duchess of Gêstalla.

Bernadotte was sent to govern Anspach, in Bavaria, where he carried out his duties with his usual faultlessness. But his interest was chiefly absorbed by the thrilling honours that were being handed so liberally to all his colleagues, and he wondered if he also would be of their number. His standing with the Emperor was good, though it never was, and indeed never could be, cordial. He knew that he had done well, both at Ulm and Austerlitz, though the Emperor's praise for him had been very scanty. Still, that was of little consequence, for the Emperor was seldom known to flatter any of his marshals.

The first intimation of his reward came in a letter from the Emperor to Grand Elector Joseph :—

You will see that I have created six fiefs in your new kingdom of Naples. I think that you should give the principal one to Marshal Bernadotte, with the title of Duke of Tarentum. Your family connection with Bernadotte makes it obligatory upon you to grant him special privileges in your palace, since his children are your nephews and you should assign to him a revenue of five hundred thousand livres (£16,000 or £20,000) a year. The late Queen of Naples did the same for Nelson.

This was the first occasion in his life that Bernadotte had read the name of Nelson without experiencing a feeling of antipathy and resentment. He was well satisfied with the honour and the amount of money offered, and he knew that Desirée would be pleased at being allowed to remain so close to Julie. But a few days later Joseph received a second letter cancelling the Naples arrangement. This letter is given in full :—

My brother, the conduct of the Court of Rome is very foolish. I wish to make them feel the first taste of what they have to fear from me. The States of Benevent and Ponte Corvo must be burdensome to you. I have converted them into two duchies, Benevent for Talleyrand, Ponte Corvo for Bernadotte. I know these states are not rich, but I shall supplement their revenues. Talleyrand is wealthy enough, not to require so much help. I shall undertake the endowment of Bernadotte's duchy.

You understand that when I bestow the title of Prince and Duke on Bernadotte, it is out of consideration for your wife, because in the army I have generals who have served me better and on whose attachment I can more safely rely. But I have felt that it would be suitable for the brother-in-law of the Queen of Naples to have a distinguished rank at your Court. Send two squadrons of cavalry and some infantry to Benevent and Ponte Corvo and appoint a Commandant to give possession of them to Talleyrand and to Bernadotte. As the journals will announce the news in a few days, no time must be lost in occupying these two places.

The little bourgeoisie of Marseilles was moving up in the world. We first met her as Desirée Clary, and we saw her become Madame Bernadotte at the age of eighteen; we saw her again as Madame la Maréchale Bernadotte at the age of twenty-five; and now, at the age of twenty-six, she had become Princess of Ponte Corvo. Most ambitious women would say that her progress was rapid and regard her with envy. But Desirée was not an ambitious woman.

If Desirée's progress had been rapid, it was dead slow compared to that of Julie, who was the first woman in France to become an

Imperial Princess and was now, at the age of twenty-eight, Queen of Naples.

Julie was described by a certain writer as "unprepossessing in appearance, with a villainous figure, a flat nose and a shapeless mouth." But in spite of those physical drawbacks, she was the Second Lady in Europe. She was admittedly rich, but the usual story of a plain woman with great wealth is that she falls under the influence of an adventurer and loses her money. Nobody can deny the adventurous qualities of Joseph, and yet the fact remains that Julie was happily married to him. She had a very kindly nature, and the epithet invariably given to her was "amiable" or, as the French call it, "aimable." We have all met Julies, for she belongs to all countries and all periods. We have all met plain women who are amiable housewives, and we know that their influence does not usually extend outside their own homes. Julie may have been unattractive in appearance, but it must be admitted that she had character, and that her influence reached out to her brother-in-law, thereby absorbing this most autocratic man to a far greater extent than she herself would have ever admitted.

Her plainness offers many a disappointment and drawback to anybody who tries to write her up, because, as is only natural, there was a great demand throughout all France for the picture or the likeness of the lady who might some day be the Empress. French women have always displayed an innate genius in the art of make-up, and unparalleled skill in the art of making themselves look alluring, especially in pictures. Julie could easily have done the same thing, but it was not in her nature even to think of it. Many artists and portrait painters came to the Palais de Luxemburg in the hope of committing her features to canvas, but when their efforts were accomplished, the amiable lady paid their fees and then proceeded to destroy their work. The result is that an attractive portrait of Julie does not exist.

Joseph is said by many writers to have been an unfaithful husband. This was probably true, but it certainly did not interfere with the peace and harmony of Julie's household. His domestic life was happier than any of the other Bonapartes—even Lucien. The fact was that these two sisters, Julie and Desirée, could show their teeth at times, with deadly effect. Joseph had learned that, on the night of Brumaire. Bernadotte had also learned it when he rather stupidly ordered Desirée to give more study to dancing and deportment. Napoleon had not yet learned it; to him they were just a "couple of girls."

Before leaving for his new kingdom, Joseph visited the Tuileries, where he had an interview with his imperial brother.

"It is not going to be an easy task, Joseph, and it will need all your tact and diplomacy to make it a success. It will be an experience for you, and perhaps a stepping-stone to something better. The people of Naples are too friendly towards the English, and regard Nelson as a hero. When their fleet returned from Aboukir Bay, the peasants crowded round the ships and gave rich presents of food and fruit to the sailors. The Queen of Naples was a friend of Nelson. She was also a sister of our Marie Antoinette, and that means that Naples is full of Royalists. You must not be too severe with these people. You must treat them kindly. Give them good laws and plenty of trade. Make them forget Nelson, who has gone to the place where all pirates eventually go. Give them plenty of parties, fêtes and festas. They like that sort of thing. I also advise that some French plays should be produced at their theatres."

"I had already thought of that. Julie is making the arrangements. She will send out companies from the Théâtre Français."

"What do you mean by that? How can she send out companies? Surely she will be going with you."

"She says she would rather stay in Paris."

"But she must not stay in Paris. I insist on her going with you and taking the children as well. The people will be interested in seeing their Royal Family. Julie must go with you."

"In that case," replied Joseph with a sweet smile, "in that case you will have to speak to Julie yourself."

But Napoleon thought better of it and decided to leave Julie alone. A few days later Joseph departed for the Kingdom of Naples, and it was observed that his wife was not with him.

At that time there were two other things that were occupying the mind of the Emperor which caused him irritation. These were his family and his marshals. He had given his family all they wanted regarding titles and emoluments, and yet they showed no gratitude for his kindness nor recognition of his greatness. He discovered that giving kingdoms to brothers was very similar to giving dinners to dogs: they always had a good sniff at their neighbour's meal before touching their own. The more honours he gave them, the more discontented they became.

Then there were the marshals. They formed a problem of their own, being similar but not identical with that of his family. They also sniffed one another's dishes before starting on their own. Bernadotte and Murat were the most unpopular with the people: Soult was a good general, but an unutterable snob: Lannes had a temper that was certain to lead him to trouble: Davout was a liar. They were terribly jealous of one another and frequently addressed themselves in terms that were most un-aristocratic. As long as they were fighting one another, everything was all right, but there might come a day when they would turn against him. Still, there was only one out of the whole eighteen who had ever dared to do that, and his name was Bernadotte. That was the reason that he had tried to propitiate Bernadotte with a principality and a generous annuity.

And so, in the opening months of 1806, Napoleon turned his back on the bickerings of his family and marshals and engaged himself in a hobby that he had always fancied, and which has already been encountered in these pages, namely match-making. His eye at this time was focussed on Bavaria. The brilliant forced march, carried out by Bernadotte at Ulm had taught him something about the German people. He had learned that Bavarians did not like Austrians: that Bavarians did not like Prussians: that Bavarians were good and reliable soldiers, when under good leadership. That meant that Bavaria and Southern Germany might be useful to him in the future. With this object in view he decided to unite France and Bavaria by means of marriage.

He arranged and executed three weddings in rapid succession. The first was that of his stepson, Eugene Beauharnais, to Princess Augusta, daughter of the King of Bavaria; the second was that of his Chief of Staff, Berthier, to a sister of Princess Augusta; the third was that of his own young brother, Jérôme, to a Wurtemberg Princess. The first of these marriage was arranged in a most peremptory manner. Apparently the Emperor had seen a china mug in a shop window bearing a picture of the Princess Augusta, and possibly some such words as

"A Present from Munich." He bought the thing and sent it to Eugène with a letter containing the words :—

I have arranged your marriage with the Princess Augusta. It has already been announced. This morning the Princess visited me and I spoke to her for a long time. She is very pretty. You will find herewith her portrait on a cup, but of course she is better looking than that.

Thus, in the few months that followed Austerlitz, Napoleon performed three spectacular achievements. He made Joseph King of Naples : he made Louis King of Holland : and, through Eugène's marriage, he won the sympathy of the South German States, thereby isolating the Kingdom of Prussia. He had of course discovered that Prussia was flirting with Pitt's coalition in London. It now became clear that Prussia, to borrow an expression of a later period, was "the next on the list."

The King of Prussia quickly realised the danger of his position and started to mobilise his army. But he was too late. Long before the mobilisation was completed, the Napoleonic legions were again on the march, this time with Berlin as the objective. They advanced in three parallel columns, led by Bernadotte, Soult and Lannes. Prussia was entered from the west, and after Bernadotte had fought a successful battle at a place called Schliez, the whole army wheeled and proceeded in a northerly direction towards the Baltic. The campaign of Iena had started.

And now we come to the most controversial incident in the whole of Bernadotte's career. The Emperor had given out that a major battle would be fought on the 15th of October. Bernadotte had received orders to be in a village called Dornburg on the morning of the 14th. On the evening of the 13th, at 6 p.m., he wrote to Berthier, "I shall be in Dornburg before daylight to-morrow." Two hours later, at 8 p.m., he wrote another letter to Berthier : "I am presuming that these are the general orders, and so I am halting my troops where they are and awaiting further orders. I am still in the neighbourhood of Naumburg and am ready to execute any orders that the Emperor may give."

Bernadotte received no answer to either of these letters, and therefore remained where he was—at Naumburg. Unbeknown to him, the date of the battle had been altered from the 15th to the 14th, and therefore it was imperative for him to have moved in accordance with what he had promised in his letter of 6 p.m., but had cancelled in his letter of 8 p.m. The result was that the Battle of Iena was fought and won by the Grand Army, and that Bernadotte, whose army had been named for the turning movement, the most important movement of the day, was not present and never came into action at all !

It may be mentioned that the details of the Battle of Iena are known to most of the senior officers of the British Army to-day, especially to those who have studied and passed Staff College examinations on strategy and tactics. The absence of Bernadotte on that fateful occasion placed all the marshals in a pickle, but, with the help of God and the luck of Napoleon, the day was successful. This battle is the perfect example of order and counter-order, chaos and mystery ending in glory and victory.

Napoleon did not conceal his discontent, and for a long time allowed it to be thought that there would be a Court of Enquiry. The marshals found themselves in agreement for the first time, only in their odium of this Gascon. Bernadotte took up the cudgels in his

own defence and openly defied the Emperor or any of his underlings to set up such a court. As they never did so, it must be assumed that they feared the tongue of the fiery Gascon !

But there was no time to enter into the details of the controversy, for it soon became clear that the Prussian campaign was not going to end at the Battle of Iena. The day had been very severe for both armies. The French had suffered heavy losses, and were in a state of exhaustion. So were the defeated Prussians, who had the further discomfort of knowing that, with the battle lost, they had to pack up and run for their lives.

The Prussian Army, under the command of General Blücher, retired from the battlefield, vigorously followed by the armies of Soult, Bernadotte and Murat. Bernadotte's army, being the freshest, was the first off the mark and forced the beaten enemy to battle at Halle. This village was a natural strong point, defended by rivers and marshes and an army of 20,000 men. Bernadotte attacked it with such vigour that in a short time he had captured the place along with 6,000 infantry and 30 guns. To show the state of Napoleon's mind at this time, it can be related that he visited the place a few days later and, in the presence of many other marshals, openly upbraided Bernadotte for attacking so strong a place with so weak a force. The whole thing was so bitter that Marshal Lefebvre wrote a personal note to Bernadotte : "They are disappointed. They would have been better pleased if you had not succeeded."

The Battle of Halle ended the first phase of the pursuit of Blücher. The second phase belonged to Murat, who fought a brilliant cavalry action, driving the enemy north-west in the direction of Lubeck and Rostock. On the 5th of December these three great Marshals, after stupendous feats of marching and fighting, were at the gates of Lubeck, where Blücher and 25,000 men were taking refuge. The final knockout was delivered by Bernadotte. He was the first to storm the city, and later opened the gates to admit Soult and Murat. Never had the French Army fought with such brilliancy and success. Three days later, on the 8th of November, 1806, Blücher surrendered to Bernadotte with his whole army. Napoleon published an order which was widely circulated :—

"The Emperor signifies his satisfaction to the Duke of Berg, to the Prince of Ponte Corvo, and to Marshal Soult and to the troops under their command, for their brilliant conduct at Lubeck and for the activity which they evinced in pursuing the enemy."

Thus ends the Iena campaign, bringing with it added glory to the Grand Army and added lustre to its all-conquering leader. With it also ended the year 1806, and on the face of everything the Emperor had no cause for dissatisfaction. Joseph was doing alright in Naples, and so apparently was Louis in Holland. The youngest brother had been so complacent in discarding an American wife and linking himself to a German, that it seemed that Jerome was due for a crown as well. He was assured that the Emperor would raise him to royal status as soon as an opportunity arose. The rest of his family were as usual at loggerheads, and so were his marshals, but he was firmly convinced that he could settle them all without much difficulty.

There was one point that Napoleon had overlooked, or rather misjudged. He had firmly believed that he had propitiated Bernadotte with the award of the principality and generous annuity. He also thought that the humiliation of Bernadotte in the Iena campaign

would act as a gag over the mouth of the Gascon for many months to come. He did not realise that Bernadotte was on the verge of slipping his leash !

But such was indeed the fact. This black-haired Gascon had refused to be down-trodden. After Iena he had repeatedly asked for a court-martial, but this had been refused. He sincerely wanted that court, for he had been under repression long enough to make him yearn to loosen his tongue and lash his enemies. Perhaps Napoleon suspected something of the sort, for he put down his foot most firmly at any suggestion of an enquiry into the conduct of the Prince of Ponte Corvo. At the same time he allowed the impression to gain ground that Bernadotte's absence on that day had nearly lost him the battle.

This treatment infuriated Bernadotte, but he succeeded in repressing his emotions. When the year 1806 came to a close, the Obstacle Man was filled with a determination such as he had not felt since the days of Brumaire. He did not want further honours or titles, like the other marshals. He wanted something else.

He wanted revenge.

CHAPTER XVI

DESIRÉE AT THE FRONT

WHEN the Emperor returned to Paris after the Prussian campaign, he received his customary ovation from the people and an unusually warm welcome from his wife. He was somewhat handicapped at having been kept in the dark regarding family matters on this campaign for there had been no Joseph to keep him informed about the inner circle. The only letters he had received were from Josephine, and they were full of praises and flattery for Queen Julie.

What had happened was that by this time both Julie and Desirée had learned about the scene that had taken place on the night of the coronation and how the Empress had accused her husband of incest with his favourite sister. This story had been told to Desirée by Pauline herself, who was in a state of fury. Desirée was inclined to be sympathetic with Pauline, but in Julie's opinion the Empress had been harshly treated. So Julie made up her mind to cultivate closer relations with Josephine, whom she found to be a very lonely woman. Further to that, she had ceased to indulge in those infidelities to which Julie had so strongly disapproved. The result was that a kind of friendship, born of sympathy had risen in Julie's heart towards the pitiful creature that occupied the throne of France. It turned out that this was the only change effected in the family circle during the Iena campaign, and was not considered as being of any importance to the Emperor, whose mind was by this time preoccupied with larger and greater problems.

Only a few weeks after his arrival an incident occurred at the front which enabled Napoleon to boast to the world of the personal valour of his marshals and the daring way in which they continually exposed themselves in the heat of battle. One of the marshals had been wounded in the neck by a bullet—in those days they called a bullet by the name of ball—and that marshal was none other than the Prince of Ponte Corvo. For the first time in his life it seemed that the Emperor was genuinely concerned about Bernadotte. He insisted on a priority

pass being handed to Desirée giving her facility to visit the front, should she so desire.

Desirée grabbed the opportunity, but by the time she reached the Baltic coast, her husband was well on the way to recovery. But his manner frightened her. She recalled that his letters to her during the Iena campaign indicated a kind of rancour and bitterness against the Emperor, while the newspapers blazed forth the glory and valour of the three great Marshals—Soul, Murat and Bernadotte. It turned out that she had only vaguely heard about his army having been absent from the field of Iena, and naturally she wanted to know more about it.

"It all hinged on an order. In the army an order delivered to a senior officer verbally by a junior officer is not an order at all. It is not valid. Everybody knows that. I refused to act on an order given me by a junior."

"Who was the junior?" asked Desirée.

"It was—— Well, it was Davout."

Desirée puckered her brows. She had often heard her husband mention this name—a name that he despised and abhorred. It was clear that there had been something serious.

"Further to that, the Emperor admonished me in the presence of other marshals. He purposely did so, in the presence of Davout."

Desirée gasped. There was a look of murder in her man's eyes as he uttered these words.

"And further, there was the question of Etiquette of Command——"

"Etiquette of Command," shouted Desirée, roaring with laughter. "I know what you mean by Etiquette of Command. It is the same as what we call Order of Precedence. It seems to me that there is not much difference between Imperial Sisters and Imperial Marshals. I think that you, my husband, are as much in love with Murat as Caroline is with Hortense."

It was on the whole a happy reunion. It must be remembered that in these rapidly changing days, husbands and wives had very little opportunity for enjoying one another's company. These two talked of the happy days at The Cradle and wondered if such times could ever come again. They talked of little Oscar, now eight years old, and Bernadotte began to yearn for the joys and problems of domestic life. He was in a curious humour, a special humour that occasionally hits the soldier man, a humour that is described in modern parlance by the words "browed off." It was a humour of disgust and revolt. A humour that shouted "To hell with this pestilential system! To hell with this eternal striking and pitching of camps, the forced marches, the endless battles and striking victories! Where is it all leading? What good is it doing the world? Its sole effect is to make us all spiteful and envious towards our colleagues and towards our families, too!"

Shortly after his convalescence, the Emperor returned to the front and fought and won the Battle of Eylau in East Prussia. This was followed by a period of diplomatic juggling and sleight-of-hand on the part of Napoleon, in which the grand army was temporarily relegated to the background. At the same time their results had an important bearing on each of the characters of this narrative.

The Battle of Eylau was followed by the Treaty of Tilsit, signed on the shores of the Baltic by the Emperors of France and Russia, with the King of Prussia in attendance. The two emperors met one another

on a river island and implanted imperial kisses on each other's imperial necks. The first words were spoken by the Czar.

"I hate the English as much as you do, and I will support all your actions against them."

"In that case," replied Napoleon, "all will soon be arranged and there will be peace between us."

Then they settled down to the task of framing the treaty. At the end of the first day Napoleon wrote to Josephine, "I have never had more prejudices against any one but him, but after the first three-quarters of an hour they disappeared like a dream. Would that I had met him sooner! I have been very pleased indeed with the Emperor Alexander. He is a handsome, good and young Emperor, who has an intellect far above what is generally accredited to him."

There were many clauses in the Treaty of Tilsit, most of which were marked Secret and Confidential, and they affected every country in Europe. It was a bitter humiliation for the King of Prussia, who was compelled to listen in silence to the terms for the partition of Central Europe. Bavaria was separated from Prussia, while the heavy industrial places of the Rhineland and south-west Germany were made into a separate kingdom, which was to be called Westphalia, and placed under the rule of the Emperor's youngest brother—the worthless Jerome.

Another clause was that France should invade Sweden in the near future, and the marshal chosen for this purpose was Bernadotte. He was appointed Governor of the three Hanseatic towns of Hamburg, Bremen and Lubeck, and proceeded to undertake his duties with his usual humanity and strong sense of justice. Two stringent orders had been impressed on him by Napoleon: firstly that he should keep an army ready for invading Sweden at short notice; and, secondly, that he should insist on all the Hanseatic towns falling into line and complying with the terms of the infamous Continental System.

Bernadotte found his new charges to be in a very different category to those whom he had ruled in Hanover and Hesse. These Hanseatic people had not been conquered, and they had all devoted their legitimate business lives to trading either direct with England, or acting as middlemen between Sweden and England. To introduce the Continental System, which meant forbidding any English ships to enter their harbours, would have meant financial ruin to them all. Bernadotte had therefore to choose between two alternatives—the prosperity of the people or the wrath of the Emperor.

To anybody who has followed the career and character of this man, the question has but one answer. True to his nature, loyal to his principles, his first thought was for the security of the people who had passed under his authority. The short break that he had spent in the companionship of his wife had revived his spirit of antagonism and he made up his mind that the whole Continental System might go to the devil, and that the prosperity of the Hanseatic towns should remain unimpaired. *In making this decision, Bernadotte unwittingly drove the first nail into the coffin of the Emperor and started to pave the way for his own future greatness.*

The Treaty of Tilsit had been barely signed before the French Emperor turned his back on the Baltic coast and hurried off to Italy for a personal conference with brother Joseph. Now what on earth could it have been that caused Napoleon to turn with such dramatic haste from the cold of the Baltic to the warmth of the Mediterranean?

The answer is that he had received a confidential message from a Prince of the Spanish Royal House, a prince whose name was Ferdinand.

Napoleon was exceptionally well versed in the private and personal affairs of all the royal families in Europe, including that of Spain. There was an air of mystery and intrigue about the Spanish Royal House that particularly delighted him. Spain had a King and a Queen who had a son called Ferdinand. The Queen also had a surreptitious lover called Godoy. Her son, Ferdinand, had lately become a widower after being married to a daughter of the Queen of Naples, who had been friendly to Nelson. The letter which Napoleon had received in Tilsit was from Ferdinand, and it asked him for the hand of a Bonaparte Princess in marriage. Napoleon was delighted. Here was an opportunity for him to meddle and muddle in the private affairs of a royal family. That was why he departed so suddenly, for the purpose of discussing the new situation with Joseph.

"But we can't do it," said Joseph. "We have not got a girl in the family of marriageable age at the moment. Our three sisters are all married, and they would be too old for him, anyhow. My two girls are far too young. I don't see what can be done."

"I was thinking of Lucien."

"Lucien! Well, of course, there is Lolotte, who is about fourteen. That seems a bit young. Do you think Lucien would agree?"

"Lucien is just like every other father. Send for him, Joseph, and let me talk to him. There is no man in the world who would not like to see his daughter as a reigning queen. We must send for Lolotte and get her to Paris. She can stay with our mother. I want Spain, for her harbours would help me in the Continental System. If the price to be paid for her is merely Lolotte, then I am willing to pay it."

"But, brother, she is not your's to give. I know Lolotte well, for her family lived with me when you were in Egypt. She is her father's own daughter."

"She is older now and has probably changed. At the moment I should like to see this match. But if it cannot be fixed, we must do something else. We may have to get rid of Ferdinand altogether. In that case, you yourself might have to go to Spain."

It is interesting for a moment to pause and follow the succession of events that this very remarkable man was putting into motion. He had won the Battle of Iena, destroyed Prussia and captured Blucher. He had turned to matchmaking and had engineered at least one marriage of outstanding importance. He had then turned to diplomacy and had achieved a brilliant success in the Treaty of Tilsit. Without any pause for rest or meditation, he had torn himself from the Baltic to the Mediterranean for the purpose of interfering with the Spanish Royal Family. Has there ever, in the whole history of the world, been a similar instance showing such amazing versatility and crafty manipulation, combined in the person of one single man?

Soon afterwards the three brothers met in conclave—Joseph, Napoleon and Lucien. The consent of Lucien was obtained after a great deal of difficulty, and it resulted in the coming to Paris of Lolotte, alias Charlotte Bonaparte. There was great curiosity on the part of the family, who wanted badly to gaze on the daughter of an outlaw. Perhaps they thought she would be imperious and defiant, but if they did, they were very disappointed. What they saw was a pretty and dignified girl of about fourteen, who was terribly homesick and wanted to get back to her own family. There was nothing defiant about her,

but there was something far worse—a haughty pride and complete indifference towards the family amounting to contempt. Desirée discovered that this girl, who was fond of books and literature, also possessed the quality which is the chief bugbear in the eyes of a despot, namely a sense of humour. This angered the Emperor so much that he ordered all her letters to be opened and read. In this way he learned that his mother, the august Madame Mère, was a miserly old woman, and that her daughters were scarecrows.

Needless to say, these letters were never allowed to reach her father, and after a short stay of a few weeks Lolotte was outlawed by the Imperial family and permitted to return to Canino—which was just exactly what she wanted. At the same time it was a bitter disappointment to Napoleon, who foresaw the possibility of serious trouble in Spain. His mighty brain ordered him to put a French Army into Spain at once under a capable General. Without a moment's hesitation he ordered Bernadotte to be prepared to take over the command of "the French forces in Spain." At the same time he wrote to Joseph telling him of the latest appointment.

"This black-haired Gascon has Moorish blood in his veins.

He was born in sight of the Pyrenees and is in many ways more of a Spaniard than a Frenchman. He is good with foreigners and ought to suit Spain."

Hardly had these two letters been written, and long before they reached their destinations, an awkward incident took place. It was a simple case of a nation of military idiots trying to muddle their way through a long war. But it stunned and stupefied the Emperor. What had happened was that the English fleet, coming from nowhere, had suddenly swooped on Copenhagen, captured the Danish fleet, and were in full possession of the whole of Denmark.

The first reaction was one of dismay and even grief. Napoleon had intended to invade Denmark himself; in fact he had promised Alexander that he would do so. If Lolotte had only been a nice, obedient girl, he could have gone back to the Balkans and finished everything. As it was, he could do nothing. He had to lump it! But his dismay soon changed to bitter anger, especially when he had discovered, as he thought, a good scape-goat.

"It is all due to that fool, Bernadotte," he told Berthier, "for he has allowed himself to fall asleep at his post. Oh, why does this man always step in to spoil my plans and mar my destiny? I have given him every opportunity and advanced him above others of greater ability. See what he has done in return. He allows a whole country to be snatched from under the beak of his nose. You will despatch a letter to him at once, cancelling the offer of command in Spain."

He returned to Paris, and shortly afterwards received an announcement that the Queen of Naples and the Princess of Ponte Corvo had arrived at the palace, in answer to a special invitation. The thought of seeing Julie and Desirée again instantly put him in a good humour, and he decided to play a diplomatic joke on them. He greeted the two girls with unbounded enthusiasm.

"I am so glad that you have both been able to come," he said, addressing them both, but looking at Desirée, "for I have not seen you since my visit to the Baltic. Ah, the Baltic. That Emperor is a nice fellow, and I am sure that you would have liked him. Do you know, Eugénie, that he has sent you a present which he ordered me to give you with my own hands?"

Having said this, he got up and the girls watched the little rounded body move swiftly out of the room. Desirée was delighted to hear that the Czar had sent her a present. When the Emperor returned he advanced slowly, with his hands behind his back, in the direction of Desirée.

"I invest you, dear Eugénie, with the Grand Cordon of Beauty and Virtue." He raised his hands, bringing to view a magnificent *pélisse* of the rarest and loveliest white fur that even Russia can produce. He bent down and placed it round the neck and over the shoulders of his first lover. He then started back and smilingly contemplated the joyous rapture on the faces of the two girls, and listened to the chatter which women use under such circumstances. After a while he interrupted and this time addressed himself to Julie.

"And I have also seen that lucky fellow, your husband. He has got everything he wants in the world, except one thing. It happens to be the most important thing of all. He is a lonely man, Julie, and he wants you. Do you not think it would be possible for you to pay him a visit, no matter how short it may be?"

"Yes, sire. I shall be delighted." She had not meant to say it. The words had literally been forced out of her; conjurers do the same to their victims.

"I am very glad indeed to hear you say that. I am sure it will do good to you both. But you must realise, Eugénie, that the Russian ladies do not wear them like that. Let me show you." So saying, he settled the *pélisse* on Desirée's shoulders, and smiled and prattled the two girls out of the door and on to the staircase. When he bade them *au revoir* he whispered to Julie that it was imperative for her to see Joseph and that she should start as soon as possible.

The girls went back to their carriage and drove away, while many stood and stared at the lovely *pélisse*. Anon Desirée awoke from her dream and said, "How diplomatic he has become! Fancy all that fuss about getting us up there and giving me the *pélisse*. Of course, it was nothing but a sop to get rid of you, Julie. He is trying to separate us."

As soon as the girls had gone, Napoleon returned to Berthier and told him to offer the Spanish command to Murat. He did not bother to tell him about the girls, because he did not want anybody to know that they had even been there.

But there was one place which learned about it all within a miraculously short space of time. Paris was full of British spies, and London was both interested and inquisitive to learn what was the motive behind this comedy. The Giant Corsair was beginning to waken out of a very long sleep. People in England were saying that Boney was playing some wild-cat scheme over the Spanish succession. London thought that the sudden departure of Julie from Paris to Naples had something to do with it. At the moment nobody could see the connection but——

London was not far wrong.

CHAPTER XVII

QUEEN JULIE

IN the spring of 1808 Julie left Paris for Naples. The parting from Desirée was painful, for it will have been noted that the two sisters had never been separated before, except for the few weeks that Desirée had spent with Bernadotte on the shores of the Baltic. Many writers have expressed the view that Julie's unwillingness to join her husband was due mainly to his marital infidelities. Rumour had it that Joseph was friendly and familiar with a Neapolitan Marquise. If it was true, the lady must have been conveniently relegated to the background, for nothing was seen or heard of her during the whole of Julie's visit.

She discovered that Joseph was, on the whole, popular in Naples. He had given the country some reforms which had done it good. The people liked him, but at the same time they had a good memory. They had not forgotten their exiled queen and her English friends, the Hamiltons. The news of the coming of Julie interested them deeply. They wondered what the new queen would be like.

At the opening, Julie made a bad impression owing to her deliberate refusal to appear anywhere in public. On the other hand, she completely won the hearts of the close circle of Joseph's friends and visitors. Joseph was fond of whist, and after a few rubbers would bring his card colleagues into the drawing room, where all would sit and listen to Julie reading out romances or fables by her favourite French authors—Voltaire and la Fontaine. She thus obtained a reputation for arts and culture which many Neapolitans would have liked to cultivate. But when they tried to do so, she always informed them that her visit to Naples was only temporary, and that Paris was her real home.

All this was very strange. Within a few months the little kingdom had been inflicted with three Bonaparte visits following one another in quick succession. First there was Napoleon and then Lucien, who had met and arranged Lolotte's visit to Paris. Then, with hardly any pause, Julie had come along and she was telling them all that she was there against her own will and would be getting back to Paris at the first opportunity.

Meanwhile, back in Paris, Napoleon was making up his mind. He had decided that Ferdinand was quite impossible, and proceeded, by means of a variety of plots, subterfuges, double-dealing and treachery to liquidate the Spanish Prince. Then he sent a peremptory order to Joseph, telling him to return at once to Paris. Joseph obeyed, and on his arrival in the capital was informed that he would not be returning to Naples, but was to become King of Spain instead.

A most peculiar situation followed in Naples. Julie suddenly found herself left alone, with a kingdom on her hands! This time she was no longer the absentee-cum-nominal queen that she had been hitherto, but undoubted Queen in her own right. The experience for her was entirely novel and not quite in keeping with her nature. In duty bound, she altered her mode of life and allowed herself to be seen in public places. She patronised the theatres which she loved and where she could see plays acted by her own companies and performed in her own language. She interested herself in schools and hospitals, and soon

began to feel herself becoming popular. As her carriage drove through the streets, under the smoky shadow of Mount Vesuvius, the poor people would rush out of their homes and wave to her, while the little children ran beside it till she reached her destination. She never went out without taking with her a purse full of coins, which was invariably empty on her return. Hence it came about that the memory which Naples bore to Queen Julie was summed up in these words: "Her Majesty conquered all hearts by her sweet temper and her kind nature. When the poor and distressed appealed to her, as they often did, they never appealed in vain."

She only spent three months in Naples, and her public life did not start till after Joseph's departure. She knew, of course, that her stay would only be of short duration, and the whole time she was wondering which one would be chosen to take Joseph's place. Would it be Bernadotte? The male Bonapartes were already on thrones, and the choice, failing a member of the family, would naturally go to one of the marshals. There were only two marshals connected with the family, and they were Bernadotte and Murat. One of them was almost certain to succeed. She did not have to wait long to know. A letter from Desirée informed her that Bernadotte was, not for the first time, under a deep cloud of imperial disfavour. Within a few days she received orders to hand over the kingdom of Naples to the Duke and Duchess of Berg, alias Caroline and Murat.

Thus, within the space of ten years, the people of this small and insignificant kingdom saw with their own eyes an unusually large number of the celebrities in this age of greatness. The list was very imposing and started with Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton; proceeded with Joseph, Napoleon and Lucien Bonaparte; ended with Caroline and Murat. It would be difficult to draw up a list of personages so utterly different and yet so clearly marked as individuals. Nelson the incomparable, Nelson the most loveable hero of all times, whose name brings a sparkle and glow to the dull, drab pages of the world's history. Emma, with her passion for loving her sailor and writing him all those ill-spelt letters—surely the most attractive jargon ever penned by a woman. Joseph, the curious mixture of diplomat and gigolo, brilliant in trivialities, hopeless in a crisis. Julie, gentle and homely, but at the same time unquestionably great, not because she was born great or had achieved greatness, but simply because greatness had been thrust upon her.

And now the Neapolitans were to meet the Murats, who were being introduced to them as King Joachim and Queen Caroline. What a pair to follow in the wake of Nelson and Emma! Napoleon, as Emperor of France, has described Murat as an incomparable cavalry leader, but the same Napoleon as exile of St. Helena, described him as a glittering fool. Lastly, there was Caroline. Large in body, selfish and arrogant by nature, gross and ungainly in figure, she possessed a coarseness, not unlike that of Nell Gwyn. She was firmly convinced, and was always trying to convince others that it was due entirely to her that her husband had gained promotion, and that she and she alone would be the ruler of the house and State.

The Murats reached Naples in June, 1808, and drove to the Palace in full state. The drive through the city proved an impressive sight for the people, with the magnificent dragoons, carefree hussars and guard of war-scarred veterans, mounted on jingling chargers. They were greeted by Julie, and proceeded to show her the medals that had

been struck for the edification and uplift of the Neapolitans. One side showed "Caroline Bonaparte, Queen of Naples, 1808," and the profile of a masculine lady with a neck like a champion heavyweight. The other side showed "Joachim Murat, King of Naples, 1808," and the profile of a man wearing a sardonic smile, a coronet of laurel leaves, and a mottled scar running from the ear to the side of the mouth.

Their talk and behaviour seemed as if it had been specially chosen for the purpose of wounding the super-sensitive Julie. First, it was Murat who boasted that the whole success of Lubeck was due entirely to himself. The mere mention of the name of Bernadotte caused him to scoff and sneer. Murat was like all other senior military officers in that he hated a rival. He differed from them only in the loudness of his brawling voice as befitting a man who had chosen a tavern for his birthplace and a cavalry squadron for his development.

It seemed that every word uttered by Murat was aimed against Bernadotte, but when Caroline started, it seemed that all her hatred and disgust was concentrated against the absent Joseph.

"When you think of those great victories of Marengo, Austerlitz, Iena and Lubeck, and that none of them would ever have been won without the aid of the cavalry, you must admit that the Crown of Naples is a very poor return for services such as we have given. For myself I say nothing beyond that I am an Imperial Princess by birth," and here she added with a touch of feminine malice "by birth and not merely by marriage. The natural thing for the Emperor to have done would have been to give us the Crown of Spain, but evidently he thought otherwise. Instead, he has given it to a man who was too stupid even to command a Regiment of Infantry. It is the height of absurdity to make such a man King of Spain."

Julie remained in Naples for three weeks after the arrival of the Murats, and for her they were three weeks of torture. Still, all bad things, like all good things, eventually come to an end, and it was with no feelings of regret or remorse that she parted from her uncouth successors. She wanted to go home to Paris, but her orders were that she must travel west by easy stages until she had joined Joseph in Madrid. Her coach travelled north and then proceeded west along that route (surely the loveliest of all routes) that leads through the Riviera. She reflected that this same road also led to the city of her own birth and childhood. Perhaps she wondered if she would see Marseilles again; but if she did, she was disappointed. In the neighbourhood of Toulon her coach was halted by French officers in uniform, with terse orders that she was to remain where she was, until she received orders to proceed. No reason was given, but it was clear to Julie that something had gone wrong.

And she was right. Something had certainly gone very wrong indeed. The Emperor had sent two French armies to fight two different parts of Spain in order to maintain security while King Joseph was entering Madrid. But at the very time that Julie was driving along the Riviera news arrived that one of these two armies had been attacked by Spaniards at a place called Baylen. The Frenchmen had been taken completely by surprise, and no less than 20,000 of them had been forced to surrender with their arms and equipment. The defeat of the French was inflicted by Spanish troops without any foreign assistance whatever, and the name of the French general was du Pont. Later, it was

announced that General du Pont had been given his command on the recommendation of Marshal Bernadotte.

The Battle of Baylen provided France with a bitter shock and England with a refreshing tonic. The rest of Europe found it difficult to believe that the invincible army of the great Emperor could have suffered such an overwhelming defeat at the hands of a gang of ill-armed and untrained guerillas. But they were not given much time for reflection. After gaining this superb victory, the conquering Spaniards marched straight on to Madrid, where the people were waiting to give a welcome to their new king. At this point the situation in Madrid becomes quite humorous. The welcome that should have been given to Joseph was given to the guerillas instead. For that reason the King of Spain was forced to "hang around" the neighbourhood of the capital till a more propitious moment. And similarly, the Queen of Spain was forced to "hang around" Toulon, waiting for orders. She did not remain there long. She returned to Paris.

Julie reached her home in the month of July, when Paris is at its best and before the hot weather has had time to set in. Oh, how glad she was to be home again! She was perfectly willing to leave all the delights of Naples and Madrid to Joseph. She was not particular as to whether his lady friend was a Duchessa, Marquisa, or Contessa—he could have them all, provided only that she could remain in Paris. She had positively loathed the idea of going to Madrid, and in her heart—though of course she would, never, never have admitted it—she was quite grateful to those Spanish guerillas for making it possible for her to return to her home.

She found Desirée on tiptoes with excitement, and simply over-bubbling herself with confidential information.

"All sorts of things have been happening since you left. I have two new friends, and you will never guess who they are. One is Fouché and the other is Talleyrand. Both of them have been playing up to me and I have never known them to do it before. There is a conspiracy afoot!"

"A conspiracy!"

"Yes, Julie, a conspiracy. Those two men are going to stage another coup. They are going to get rid of the Emperor and have a king instead. It is all very deep and complicated. They have a tremendous backing from those people who are tired of war and think they would be more likely to have peace from a king. And who else, do you think, is in it? The old woman herself!"

"What! She must be mad! If the Emperor were to go, she would have to go, too. Why should she turn against him?"

"Heavens! Haven't you heard about it? I would have told you before, but all my letters are now being opened. We have to thank Lolotte for that. He is going to divorce her and marry again."

"Divorce! Marry again! To whom?"

"A Russian girl called Catharine, who is either the sister or the niece of Alexander. They fixed it up at Tilsit. It was all very imperial, as from one emperor to another. We are not supposed to know anything about it, but of course the old woman guessed it all as soon as he returned. And now she is worried about her own security, and if there is to be a divorce, she wants friends on the other side."

"Oh, what a shame! What a wicked, wicked shame!"

There was a big ball that night at the Tuileries, given by the Emperor and Empress to mark the end of the season. Desirée loved these

dances, where she learned all the latest gossip. Julie did not care for them so much, but she always went to them, either to satisfy her husband when he was at home or her sister when he was away.

When they reached the palace, Julie told her coachman that he could please himself as to whether he returned to the Luxemburg or waited in the neighbourhood. He replied that he would wait, and watched out of the corner of eye the welcome that was always extended to his royal mistress. The Clary carriage was well-known to the citizens of Paris, who invariably collected in large numbers when there was a ball at the Imperial Palace. A subdued welcome greeted Julie, for this was the first time that they had seen her as Queen of Spain. Immediately afterwards there were louder ejaculations from the female section of the crowd, who were heard to say, "Oh, isn't it lovely? Oh, I should like to have one like that," from which it will be easily deduced that the Princess of Ponte Corvo was wearing the fur *pélisse* that the Emperor brought from Tilsit.

The two girls made their way up the winding staircase and when they reached the top were greeted by a very intelligent young woman who wore the insignia of a Maréchale. This girl was the Duchesse d'Abrantes, the wife of Junot, Desirée's former suitor. She curtsied to Julie and bowed to Desirée, and asked after Joseph. She then informed them that her husband was also in Spain, where he was Commander-in-Chief of the French forces. Neither of the girls liked this woman very much for she was a terrible scandal-monger, and gave the impression of being what would now be called a "woman reporter." She was not very accurate in her statements, although in this case her remark about Junot being in command of the French forces in Spain was quite true.

They moved on and Desirée talked to Pauline who, to her great surprise, was wearing a *pélisse*, exactly the same as her own. It transpired that the Emperor had brought three of them from Tilsit and had given one to Pauline and one to Desirée, but nothing was known of the third. They passed on, chatting to various friends and then, like everybody else, they found themselves in groups, waiting for the appearance of the Emperor. But it seemed that they had to wait a long time. It was most unusual for the Emperor to be late. But on this evening the Emperor was very late indeed, so late that the groups of distinguished guests were beginning to feel impatient.

After a while it began to be clear that there was something wrong with this ball. There was the usual colour and beauty, but not enough glory and not enough gaiety. Many of the guests had serious expressions on their faces. Desirée overheard the words "l'armée anglaise" spoken at her side, and she started, for the tone was not jocular, nor even contemptuous. But the main question was: Where was the Emperor? What had become of him?

After waiting for what seemed an interminable period, one of the court officials approached Julie's group and gave the news. "There is bad news from the front, and the Emperor will not appear. The guests are asked to withdraw."

Julie and Desirée obeyed the order and returned to their carriages. On their way out, they noticed in one of the alcoves that the Duchesse d'Abrantes had fainted away. As they went out at the main door, they learned that an English army had suddenly appeared in Spain, had attacked Junot's army and had almost annihilated it.

The news sent a cold shiver down the backs of all the Bonaparte

circle. What was the matter with the Grand Army that it should suffer two major defeats in so short a period? And what was an English army doing in Spain, which had a French king and was therefore part of the French Empire? Was it not a deliberate breach of all the laws of civilisation and etiquette on the part of these islanders to trespass on French property?

From the above it will be seen why London was so interested in the travels and trials of Joseph and Julie. It will also be seen that the Battle of Vimiero had been fought, the opening battle of the Peninsular War. It will be remembered that in that battle Sir Arthur Wellesley captured every piece of artillery that Junot possessed, and very nearly captured the general as well.

The two sisters drove back to the Luxemburg Palace in a low state of mind. Desirée muttered that "this time at any rate, no blame for the disaster could be attached to Bernadotte." After that she wrapped the *pélisse* tightly round her neck and went off in a sort of trance. When they reached the palace she insisted on going for a walk by herself into the garden.

She made her way to the very spot where, ten years previously, she and Bernadotte had sat together on a memorable night. Once again she heard the words which at the time had sounded to her like treason: "*Jealous of a star! Now, why on earth should I be jealous of a star?*"

She gazed up into the cloudless heavens and scanned the stars, looking for the Etoile Napoleon.

But she looked in vain. It was not there.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE STORM BURSTS

THE reason for the dispersal of the guests at the July ball was not entirely due to the Battle of Vimiero, although admittedly it formed one of the principal causes. It was deeper and personal. It appeared that in the course of that afternoon Napoleon had learned about the intrigues of the Empress and the news had annoyed him greatly. But when he heard that the name of Bernadotte was being mentioned as his successor, his fury knew no bounds. He went into one of those ungovernable rages which in these days would be compared to an epileptic fit. On top of that the news of Junot's reverse had made it impossible for him to attend the last ball of the season.

Thus, Desirée's remark that "at any rate Bernadotte cannot be blamed this time" was distinctively premature. Indeed, the Emperor was far more angered against Bernadotte than against Junot or even Josephine. It was quite clear that the stormclouds were again gathering over these two men and might burst at any time. The girls had seen it all before. They had seen the red light, burning like blood at the time of Brumaire. They had seen the green light which had been allowed to shine for a long period in the Austrian wars, mainly owing to Bernadotte's insatiable thirst for military glory. The summer of 1808 showed them the amber light simultaneously with the red. It was only a matter of time before the red light would be alone.

But if there was a danger light glowing between Bonaparte and

Bernadotte, it was nothing compared to the beacon that had suddenly flared up in Europe. The Spanish rising had proved infectious and had given encouragement to all the beaten and conquered nations, particularly in Central Europe. Prussia and Austria were both re-arming and Napoleon decided to have another conference with Alexander.

The two Emperors met at Erfurt, in Prussia, but it was in a very different atmosphere from that of Tilsit. To begin with, Napoleon had told Alexander at Tilsit, as one Emperor to another, that he was willing to marry a Russian Princess. Alexander had told him all about Catharine, and Napoleon, like Barkis, was willin'. But when he turned up at Erfurt, he learned that the same Catharine had in the meantime been married to somebody else. Of course, it was trivial and unimportant, but as a prelude to the meeting of two Emperors it was somewhat unfortunate.

It appeared that Napoleon was concerned about Spain. He did not want to fight on two separate fronts, and he wanted Alexander to take over the Central European situation while he himself proceeded south in order to wipe out the armies of England and Spain in the Peninsula. But Alexander was not willing to do that. He pointed out that Napoleon had failed to keep his promise about invading either Sweden or Denmark, and he therefore saw no reason for his army to maintain France's newly-won territory in Central Europe. All that he was willing to do was to recognise France's claim to Spain.

Napoleon returned to Paris, having failed to get anything he wanted from Alexander. He did not bring any more *pélisses* back with him. He was, in fact, in a very bad humour, and promptly issued orders to all his marshals in the Centre and North of Europe to stand by for immediate action. He then betook himself to the Spanish front. A brilliant campaign followed, in which the Spaniards were heavily defeated, and an English army under Sir John Moore was literally driven out of the Peninsula.

At the close of the year 1808 the position of the Emperor was very strong indeed from the territorial point of view. But there were one or two drawbacks, though none of them really serious. Instead of fighting on one front, as had always been his wont, he was fighting on three—Central Europe, Spain and Paris. He knew that there was a great deal of underground hostility to him in his own capital. He also knew that some of the marshals, particularly Soult, Massena and Marmont were inclined to give trouble. Since Murat had become King of Naples, they had wanted to become kings as well. He knew that he could control them all without difficulty, but he could not be in three places at the same time.

All this while Bernadotte had been employed in controlling the Hanseatic towns which were distributed along the Baltic coast, and included such cities as Hamburg, Wilhelmshaven and Ghent on the North Sea. He had felt distinctly apprehensive over the Emperor's call to arms, owing to the mixed elements in the force under his command. No less than three-quarters consisted of foreign, German-speaking troops, mostly Saxons. His French garrison had been considerably reduced, the proportion being one Frenchman to three foreigners. The latter had for the most part fought for Prussia, and had shared in the Prussian defeats at Iena and Lubeck. In the event of the resumption of serious fighting, he considered that these troops might be unreliable. He made many complaints to the Emperor on the reduction of his French troops, but the Emperor merely ignored them, saying that Bernadotte

was "like an old corporal who complains bitterly when a man is taken from his file."

This treatment annoyed him greatly and to such an extent that he actually wrote a letter to his chief asking for permission to retire from the army.

"I have already had the honour of entreating Your Majesty to relieve me of the command of the Saxons. I have already explained to Your Majesty that I am unequal to the task of leading foreigners in battle. I eagerly await Your Majesty's kind assent to my prayer, for the treatment which I experience every day is affecting my morale very sensibly and exhausts all the energies of my soul.

"I came to Dresden without having received proper instructions. The first letter containing orders which might have been of the utmost importance, has taken, owing to the hazards of war, sixteen days to reach me. All this, Sire, makes me tremble for the success of my operations, when I see my efforts perpetually paralysed by a hidden hand against which I cannot prevail. I therefore implore Your Majesty to grant me retirement, unless you deign to employ me in some distant expedition, where my enemies would no longer be interested in persecuting me.

J. B. BERNADOTTE,

Prince of Ponte Corvo."

Many other letters of similar import were despatched, but none received a reply. Such was the feeling between these two men on the eve of the Battle of Wagram. The old animosity was returning with ever-increasing violence, and it was coming at a time, though neither of them knew it, when the sword and genius of the great Gascon were being placed for the last time at the disposal of the Emperor.

The story of the Battle of Wagram, the most vital in the whole history of these two men, can best be told in their written, rather than their spoken words. It is probably the only case in military history where the official bulletins and correspondence depart from their heavy, pontifical language and descend to bitter, personal acrimony. It must, however, be remembered that the Battle of Wagram is not to be compared with Marengo, Austerlitz or Marengo; still, for all that, it was a major battle.

The French bulletin announced that a battle had been fought at Wagram, which had involved a terrific slaughter of both man and beast. The fighting had been unusually heavy; the Saxon troops under the Prince of Ponte Corvo had wavered, and their commander was under a cloud. On the other hand, it was a brilliant victory for French arms. An Austrian army of 70,000 men had been destroyed at a loss of only 1,500 killed and 3,000 wounded Frenchmen.

Such was the official French bulletin, and it can be imagined that when London heard of it, the great city drooped its eyes and once again tightened its lower lip. But just as London became more resolute, so the emotions of Bernadotte ranged from the depth of misery to the height of anger.

As soon as the action was over, Bernadotte issued an order of the day which contained these words:—

"Soldiers, I wished to lead you to a field of honour. You have been face to face with death all the time. You have done all that I expected from you. But they will not do you justice because you were under my command."

The order had hardly been written when Bernadotte was handed the official bulletin, quoted above. His eyes nearly shot out of his head in his utter amazement. Fifteen hundred dead ! Why, in his own army alone, the number of dead was considerably more than seven thousand. The Saxons had wavered ! Why, it was the Saxons that fought their way into Wagram. It was the Saxons who had borne the entire brunt of the massed counter-attack, in which they had been compelled to retire. They had stood, just as he himself had stood, until they had been shot down.

Throwing his customary prudence to the winds, Bernadotte sat down and penned another order of the day :—

“Saxons, on the 5th of July, between 7,000 and 8,000 of you pierced the centre of the enemy’s army and fought your way to Wagram in spite of the resistance of 40,000 of the enemy, supported by fifty guns. You fought until midnight, and you bivouacked in the middle of the Austrian lines. On the 6th you renewed the combat with the same perseverance. Amidst the ravages of the artillery, your living columns stood as motionless as brass. Saxons, the great Napoleon witnessed your devotion. He counts you amongst his braves. Saxons, a soldier’s fortune consists in doing his duty, and you have nobly performed yours.”

And now it was the turn of Napoleon’s eyes to shoot out of his head. It was an unheard of thing for such an order to be published. It was highly irregular, and there was not a word of truth in it ! The only proper and recognised method for a marshal to state a complaint was by means of a private letter, after which the Emperor would investigate the matter.

Napoleon answered Bernadotte’s Order in two letters, one to the marshals and the other to Bernadotte. This is what he wrote to the marshals :—

“His Majesty the Emperor commands his army in person, and it belongs to him alone to assign to each one the share of the glory to which he is entitled. The success of the army is due to French troops and not to foreigners. The Prince of Ponte Corvo’s order tends to put forward unfounded pretensions in favour of troops of secondary importance, and is contrary to truth, to policy, and to national honour.

“The Prince of Ponte Corvo’s troops did not remain as motionless as bronze. They were the first to beat a retreat. His Majesty was obliged to cover them by the army of the Viceroy and Marshal MacDonald. It is to this marshal that the praise is due which the Prince of Ponte Corvo attributes to himself. Nevertheless, the Emperor directs that these orders, which might pain the Saxons, shall remain secret and shall only be circulated among the marshals.”

The letter which he addressed to Bernadotte was similar in theme but with slightly different words :—

“His Majesty testifies his extreme displeasure at the Marshal Prince of Ponte Corvo’s order of the day which has been published in all the papers. It is out of place, because for months past he has been complaining about the Saxons. The order of the day contains many inaccuracies. It was Oudinot who took Wagram on the 6th and so the Prince of Ponte Corvo could not have taken it. It is not true that the Saxons forced the enemy’s centre. They did not fire a shot.

"Speaking generally, I shall be pleased that you should know that I consider that the Prince of Ponte Corvo has not done well in this campaign. He is a man who wants riches, pleasure, greatness, but does not wish to buy them by the dangers and fatigues of war. In truth his column of bronze was constantly routed."

Bernadotte perused both these letters most carefully, and they gave him food for thought. The more he looked on them, the more he approved of his own gasconade. There was a distinct weakness, a lack of punch, in what the Emperor had written. For months past he had awaited an opportunity of this sort, but feared that his courage might fail him. His order had contained two highly audacious sentences, "you stood as motionless as brass" and "the great Napoleon witnessed your devotion; he numbers you amongst his braves." The first of them—the column of brass—had been blown to smithereens, as he knew it would be. But the second—numbered amongst his braves—had passed without comment. Why was that? And why was there such need for secrecy as expressed in the letter to the marshals?

The truth is that Napoleon did not dare to make public his own views for fear of incurring the dislike of the Saxons as well as the thousands of other foreigners that had been compelled to fight for him. Perhaps it was Fate, perhaps it was Chance that had placed in Bernadotte's hand a weapon of devastating subtlety. The question now was whether he could use it to the best advantage or not.

Napoleon wrote another letter on the same subject, which he addressed to Fouché, the Chief of the Secret Police in Paris. It is quoted in full, for in many ways it is one of the most remarkable effusions that he ever penned:—

"The Prince of Ponte Corvo, who is going to Paris, will probably have a conversation with you. You will let him know:—

That I was displeased with his order of the day to the Saxons, which had a tendency to ascribe glory to them which was not their due, for they were in flight on the 6th;

that I was no less displeased with his order to the National Guard, in which he said he had only 15,000 of them, whereas there were 60,000 on the Scheldt;

that even if he had only 10,000 it is criminal on a general's part to let the enemy and all Europe into the secret of his military strength;

that I was dissatisfied during the Swedish business, at his having allowed the Swedes admission to the ports, thus compromising me with Russia;

that he receives letters from a party of schemers in Paris: I know he is not fool enough to listen to them, but the whole thing is improper;

That it is his duty to be straightforward and get rid of all this rabble and not permit them to write to him;

That if they continue to write, misfortune will overtake him.

The Prince of Ponte Corvo made a great deal of money at Hamburg. He made money, too, at Ebling. That brought the bad business of Poland and the Battle of Eylau on me. I am tired of his schemes, and I am shocked that a man whom I have loaded with benefits should lend his ear to a set of wretches that he knows and values at their proper worth.

You will tell him that he has never seen a man or received a letter without my knowledge, and that I am aware how little

importance he attaches to it all, but at the same time, to permit such men to write to him is the same as encouraging them.

"All this is private and confidential. You will make no use of these details unless the Prince of Ponte Corvo should speak to you. If he does not, you will say nothing to him.

NAPOLEON.

This remarkable letter is a strange mixture of false charges and downright lies, overshadowed by a real fear of the man who was using his own weapons and emerging as his strongest rival. It was utterly ridiculous on the part of Napoleon to blame a marshal for "ascribing glory to the Saxons which was not their due." Napoleon was most emphatic on this point. The argument that he drilled into his marshals, repeating it like a parrot after every battle, was that glory is for him who *takes* it and not for him who earns it, adding that "in this way power and glory are the same thing." He encouraged his marshals to look for glory and then snatch it, knowing perfectly well that they would not be such fools as to do so. For his slogan was neatly covered by another, which was that glory could not be obtained from anybody but himself. The action of Bernadotte infuriated him because it was the first and indeed the only instance in his whole career where a marshal had boldly snatched glory from right under the imperial eyebrows.

Another interesting point is revealed in the futile result of all the searching and prying into Bernadotte's private correspondence. But here is definite proof that he had never given the writers the smallest encouragement. One also notices the note of disappointment caused by the ineffectiveness of the search. The statement that Bernadotte "made a great deal of money at Hamburg" shows clearly that the great Emperor could descend at will from the height of Caesar to the depth of a Bonaparte woman. One could expect such words from Caroline, and one is shocked at hearing that they were used by Napoleon.

There was an interview between the two men following the battle, but nobody was present, and neither of the two would ever reveal its purport. But we can take it for granted that it was hot—very hot indeed. It resulted in Bernadotte receiving permission to "take the waters" owing to the "poor state of his health." But Bernadotte had no intention of taking any waters, and the state of his health was perfect. He returned to Paris, to his home and to his wife.

He had often expressed a desire for a spell of domestic life, but when he got it, he found that it was not nearly as nice as he had hoped it would be. He was surrounded by spies and agents who watched his movements and interfered with his correspondence. He became suspicious of all and diplomatically astute in answering questions. Imperial agents adopted every kind of disguise in dress, manner, speech and even bribery to trip him, but they all failed.

When the year 1809 came to an end Bernadotte was in the very depths of humiliation and misery. The part that he had been forced to play made him morose and sulky and irritable, and in every way a most unpleasant companion. Napoleon suggested that he should pay a visit to the principality of Ponte Corvo, which he had never seen. He refused the offer with righteous contempt, for the princely title, given him by the Emperor, was becoming loathsome to him.

The after-effects of Wagram were similar to those of Brumaire, but there were many differences. There was no friendly Sarrazin, to whose house he could repair for shelter and sustenance, and, above all, there was no Lucien. He racked his brains but could see no way out. In good truth, these were the darkest hours of his whole life. But there is an old saying that "the darkest hour of the night is the one that immediately precedes the dawn of a better day."

CHAPTER XIX

AN EMPEROR TAKES A BATH

THE Emperor had many peculiarities in his character and behaviour. The most striking was his habit of pulling the ears of his acquaintances, especially women and children. Another was his habit of holding important interviews in his bedroom at the very time that he was having his morning bath. On such occasions he was always in his best humour and seemed to enjoy causing embarrassment to his visitors, and especially those who were from foreign countries.

It came about one morning in the summer of 1810 that the imperial autocrat was sitting in his imperial bath which his imperial lackey was replenishing with relays of hot water. He was in one of his good moods, meaning that he burst frequently into fits of uproarious laughter and splashed the water about, just like a schoolboy. And, indeed, there was every reason for him to be happy. Was he not master of Europe? And, better still, was he not about to become a bridegroom?

Yes, indeed, Napoleon was going to be married. Not to the daughter of a soap merchant in Marseilles, nor even a titled relic of the Revolution. Not a bit of it. His new fiancée was a real thoroughbred, daughter of an Emperor whose pedigree went back for centuries. This girl had consented to become the mother of his child. The thought exhilarated him and made him chuckle with delight. He would give her a child all right!

"Come, Constant, more hot water." The valet obeyed in silence, adding the water from a jug with a very long handle. "Ah, that is better. . . ." The Emperor burst into senseless laughter, at the same time splashing the hot water all over his face and head. Then he burst into song, and his voice was anything but melodious:—

Les voyez-vous ?

Les hussards, les dragons et La Garde.

"Tell me, Constant, are there any visitors for me this morning?"

"Yes, sire. There is an emissary from Spain."

"From Spain . . . hein. That will be from brother Joseph. Show him in, Constant, show him in." As Constant retired Napoleon again burst into raucous song, rolling and splashing the water all over himself and the surrounding floor as well. Presently, Constant returned, accompanied by a very indolent-looking man in Spanish uniform. He was short and fat and the tunic he wore had been designed for a man who was tall and thin. His hair was jet black and the absence of a moustache revealed a pair of thick, sensuous lips. His eyes boggled at the strange sight before him. He had never seen an Emperor playing porpoise before.

"His Majesty King Joseph is well," spluttered the portly emissary,

"but he wishes me to tell you that he is having trouble with a certain section of the Spanish people."

"Trouble, hein." There was a note of irritation in the voice of the Emperor. "There is no need for excuse for trouble from any of the people. He must put down these disturbances. What are the police doing?"

"There are not enough of them, Sire."

"Then he must appoint more of them," came the reply, delivered in those sharp, lashing tones that always filled the marshals with awe, "of course, he must appoint more."

"His Majesty says there is not enough money to pay for all the police that he wants."

"Not enough money. . . . Bah, Spaniards are cheap enough. Why is he always asking me for money? He must get it for himself. He must do what the English do. He must tax the rich."

"His Majesty says that there are no rich men in Spain, Sire."

"Nonsense. There are rich men everywhere." By this time the Spanish gentleman was edging towards the door. He had at first been pleased at the Emperor's affability in admitting him to the privacy of his bedroom. But he was beginning to notice a change in the manner of the Emperor, who was becoming more like a lion than a kitten. "You ought to know that without my having to tell you. Here, here, more hot water, Constant. . . . Oh, hay-yay, would you burn me alive, you goja . . ." But Constant merely smiled at that last word, and with the smile of his valet the Emperor brightened and broke into a happy guffaw.

The lineal descendant of Alexander Borgia thought that this was a good moment to ingratiate himself with the conqueror of Europe. Putting on the seductive smile that had played havoc with the hearts of all the senoritas in Madrid, he stepped forward. But the Emperor glared at him so fiercely that he stopped dead.

"You have had my message. You may go," and the tones were so incisive that Don Quixote passed out, faded away like a leaf in autumn.

When he had gone, the smile returned to the face of the Emperor, who gazed abstractedly at the ceiling.

"Is there anyone else, Constant?"

"Yes, Sire. A special envoy from Sweden."

"From Sweden, hein. Now what on earth would he want? All right, I will talk to him."

Constant retired, but returned immediately accompanied by a young man, bright and intelligent, dressed in a smart Swedish uniform.

"I have come to inform your Majesty of the sudden and unexpected death of the Prince Royal of Sweden." The voice was clear and direct.

"This is very regrettable. I am sorry to hear it."

"Yes, Sire. And, further, my Government has expressed the desire that your Majesty should appoint a successor to his place."

"A French Prince for Sweden. . . . That is not easy. My three brothers are all on thrones, and the fourth is not in France."

"It is not necessary, Sire, that our new Prince Royal should be of Your Majesty's imperial family. We are hoping for a man who is a good general, a good administrator and of high principles."

"Such men are not easy to find. I cannot answer you now. I must think it over."

There was a pause, and it was curious to see the succession of

changes in the Emperor's manner. Alone with Constant he had been like a schoolboy ; the Spaniard had irritated and rattled him ; but this young man had brought him back sharply to his senses.

"Then am I to inform my Government that the great French Empire does not possess a general of high integrity?"

"More hot water, Constant. . . . Hein, don't stand there. . . . What is the matter with you? Hoo, man, that is too hot. . . . Do you want to burn me alive? No, no, you must wait. I cannot answer you just now. I must think it over. . . . I will let you know in a few days."

The young man bowed and went out, and as soon as he had gone, the Emperor's high spirits returned. "You heard that, Constant! He asks for a prince who is an honest man, and he is surprised when I tell him that such a prince does not exist. Ha, ha, ha. . . . You and I, Constant, we know better than that. We know more about princes than he does."

The position in Sweden was very complicated. The reigning king was old and inclined to senility. The sudden death of his only son had opened the succession to four foreign princes, each of whom had a small measure of support from individual Swedes. But the common people had made up their minds that not one of the four was satisfactory. Sweden owed her existence to trade with England, and the people did not want a man who would easily be intimidated by the Continental System. At the same time they did not want a man who was definitely hostile to the Emperor. They wanted a man who, in their own words, "participated in the French Empire's regime without being regarded as the servile instrument of the Emperor's policy."

The story that followed the envoy's visit to the Emperor is utterly fantastic. The Swedish Legation in Paris knew nothing about the request that had been made, and communicated with Stockholm. The Diet in Stockholm was utterly perplexed at the news and ordered the Legation in Paris to discover the identity of the envoy and, if necessary, to arrest him. This was done, and it resulted in what might be described as the greatest practical joke ever played on the Civil Service.

It transpired that the envoy was a young Swede called Count Morner who held no official position. He had, however, been in the Hanseatic towns during the administration by Bernadotte, and had made up his mind to try and induce this man to become a Swede. The question was how to do it. He whispered his opinion to certain Civil Servants who warmly agreed with him but were not willing to act. He saw that if there was anything to be done, he must do it himself and all alone. The young man had been impressed by the attitude of the Spanish Prince Ferdinand, who had asked the Emperor for a French Princess, and had noted the eagerness with which the Emperor accepted the invitation. He had made up his mind to do something similar in an attempt to get Bernadotte out of France. Then he read of the sudden death of the Swedish Crown Prince. He read it as a message from Heaven to himself. He applied for permission to call on the Emperor and was received in the royal bedroom. He had started the ball rolling but he had not the least idea as to how he was going to bring his plan to fruition. The suggestion that he had played a practical joke was violently disclaimed, and apparently with a great deal of justification. The young man was a Swede and a patriot and did not possess the slightest suggestion of a sense of humour.

Napoleon was told nothing about this. He took the request most

seriously, but he could think of only two names to fill the vacant post. These were his stepson Eugène Beauharnais, who had become Viceroy of Rome, and the other was Joachim Murat, who had been appointed King of Naples. He also considered Berthier and Marmont, but he was not satisfied with any of them.

The obvious choice was Bernadotte, but the Emperor refused to allow himself to listen to such a notion. At the same time, Bernadotte had a good inkling as to what was going on behind the scenes. He had already been sounded on the point during his term of Governorship of the Hanseatic towns at the time when his correspondence was being tampered with and when he was surrounded by spies and agents of the Emperor. Naturally, his suspicions were being constantly aroused, and he always replied with subtle diplomacy that nothing would induce him to contemplate any offer, unless it was accompanied by the approval of the Emperor and the assurance that it represented the wishes of the Swedish King and the Swedish people.

Meanwhile, the news had leaked out that Sweden had asked Napoleon for a Crown Prince. The Swedish people were most interested in the new development. They did not bother as to who had asked, or when or where or why, all that mattered to them was that Napoleon had been asked to nominate a Crown Prince, and they all hoped that the man he nominated would be Bernadotte. It was not long before the Government courageously asked the Emperor that Bernadotte might be released, and then it became the Emperor's turn to be surprised. At a levee in the spring of 1810 he took the opportunity of sounding Bernadotte.

"Have you news from Sweden?"

"I have had letters, as Your Majesty is well aware. But I have taken no steps in the matter."

"Do not interfere with what they are doing. It is consistent with my policy and also that of Sweden that you should go there."

In these words the Emperor divulged that he was not averse to the appointment, but still Bernadotte refused to trust him. The letter to Fouché, quoted in the last chapter, was having a most demoralising effect on Bernadotte. Not only was his correspondence being opened, but he could feel every day the vicious grip of the Secret Police tightening around him. Wherever he went, somebody was listening and watching. Life for him was rapidly becoming unbearable.

Napoleon was by no means comfortable. At one time he was gratified at seeing one of his marshals proposed for a foreign throne; but this mood would quickly change, and he would say that "Bernadotte is a danger," or "I have other marshals more worthy for the post than Bernadotte." His most typical remark was expressed in a letter:—

"There is a great deal of madness in Sweden. The present king is mad, and so was his father. And now the people are mad, because they want Bernadotte. And he would be mad, too, if he accepts their offer."

It was not long before popular feeling in Sweden urged their government to take action. An election was held, though it would be more correct to call it a referendum, which resulted in the people ordering their Diet to "make official representations to the Emperor of France, asking him to release the Prince of Ponte Corvo, to become their Crown Prince."

And so the Obstacle-Man was once again called to the Palace of

the Tuileries, fully prepared to play his part at the last official interview that ever took place between these two remarkable men. In one way it resembled their first meeting on the Italian plain, in that they were each the direct antithesis of the other, in dress, in manner and in character. Bernadotte was once again the old soldier, impassive, erect, standing rigidly to attention. On the other hand, Napoleon looked smaller than ever, and was very restless. His eyes were fixed on the ground in front of him, and his hands were clasped behind his back as he paced nervously up and down the room. On a table close by was lying an official document, bearing two mysterious words, *Letters Patent*.

"I understand, Sire, that you wish to speak to me."

"Yes. . . . Our destinies must be accomplished. . . . You and I, my cousin, have never been friends, and there have been times when I nearly hurled you out of my kingdom." The Emperor stopped still and glared at his visitor. "You have had many years' service in the army, but I have frequently had to reprove you on the battlefield. You remember Iena. Don't interrupt. Listen to me. And you remember Wagram, too. I am going to let them pass, because our destinies must be accomplished."

He turned and sat at the table, taking the *Letters Patent* which he opened. Bernadotte could see from where he stood that the documents had been assiduously drawn up, but were not yet signed.

"Now, listen to me. You have proved yourself a good administrator of my conquered territories, and Destiny has decreed that you and I should be related by marriage. It is for these two reasons that I am prepared to send you to Sweden."

"As you please, Sire."

"Good. Very good. You must listen now to two conditions. The first and most important is that you must always remember that you are a Frenchman and a Marshal of my Empire. Therefore, you must give me the oath of fidelity."

"As you please, Sire."

"Good. My second condition follows naturally on the first. You must give me your pledge that at no time will you bear arms against me."

"That, Sire, is totally impossible. As the Swedish people have done me the honour of electing me to so important a position, my first duty will be on behalf of those who have given me their confidence."

"Why do you always oppose my wishes?" Napoleon spoke as one who was aggrieved by this ingratitude. "You are, as I well know, jealous of your honour. Why then do you pay such a poor return to the country that has bred you? Have you no feeling towards the Chief who has raised you from being a mere Sergeant to the position which you now hold, Marshal and Prince of the French Empire?"

"I am indeed grateful to my country and to Your Majesty. But I can only serve one master at a time. If Your Majesty were to order me to do something that might compromise my people or be harmful to them, then I admit that I should disobey Your Majesty's order." Was there another man in the whole of France, the whole of Europe, or in the whole world that would have dared to utter such words? The Tyrant did not interrupt. He merely dropped his eyes and stared at the letters in front of him. "No, Sire, it cannot be. If you insist on your second condition, I regret that I am unable to accept your offer."

The Emperor was staring at the documents, and the heaving of his shoulders indicated that his temper was rapidly rising. Bernadotte knew the mood well. He had often seen it before, and it no longer frightened him.

"My second condition is more important than my first. On it depends the future of Northern Europe for many years to come. You are making a fool of yourself by daring to disregard my offer."

The temper had risen rapidly, and the last words were uttered or rather lashed out in a high, penetrating voice. The Emperor had risen from his chair and was standing close to Bernadotte, his hands upraised, his little fists clenched. Once again the difference in height of the two men was very noticeable. But Bernadotte, in spite of his fiery nature, stood erect and unmoved. His mother wit now came to his rescue, and in reply to Napoleon's reference to the fate of Northern Europe, he spoke the words that literally decided the whole fate of Scandinavia for the next five generations.

"And so, my Emperor, you would make me a greater man than yourself by obliging me to refuse a throne."

Napoleon glared at him and then the rigid tenseness suddenly left him, and he dropped his hands to his sides. He stepped back and again his eyes sought the ground. At that moment it was clear that he was in the presence of one who was "greater than himself." He had been stunned by those words which had hit him on the weakest spot, which was his overwhelming vanity. For a moment he was speechless. But he quickly recovered himself, turned on his heel, went back to the table where he sat down. He picked up the Letters Patent, gave a little laugh, and spoke again in his natural voice.

"All right, then, I will withdraw my second condition. I only ask you, Marshal Bernadotte, that in all cases you will remember that you are a Frenchman and a Marshal of the French Empire." So saying, he picked up a quill pen, which he dipped in the ink, and appended a note at the end of the document. Having done so, he stood up and repeated that mysterious phrase of his own making, "Our two destinies must be accomplished."

Thus ended the last interview of these two men. Bernadotte had won the day. His election as Crown Prince had obtained the full support of the Swedish people, and this interview would enable him to go to his new country, unfettered by any awkward pledges or conditions to his former chief. Nothing could possibly have been better for him.

A few days after this historic interview Napoleon wrote to Metternich:—

"He has plenty of brains. I have always found this to be the case, but he will have great difficulty in maintaining his position. The nation will expect everything from him. He will be the god from whom they will demand their bread. I cannot see that he has any talent for government. He is a good soldier and that is all. For my part, I am delighted to get rid of him, and I ask nothing better than his removal from France. He is one of those old Jacobins with his head in the wrong place, as they all are, and that is not the way to keep a throne. If you see him again, sound him a little and your opinion will be the same as mine.

"In any case I could not refuse my consent, were it only for the fact that a French Marshal on the throne of Gustavus Adolphus is one of the best tricks that can be played against England."

So Bernadotte was a good soldier, was he ? Since when, Boney, dear, did you discover that ?

CHAPTER XX

FAREWELL, BELOVED FRANCE

THE work of preparing new Letters Patent with the offending clause removed, was quickly accomplished. On the day following the historic interview, the Emperor signed the document which enabled Bernadotte to surrender his French nationality and become a Swede. Hardly had this been done, when he received a message that Her Royal Highness the Crown Princess of Sweden was anxious that he would grant her an audience. At first the title sounded strange to him, but after a moment's reflection, he chuckled to himself and ordered her to be admitted.

Soon she stood before him, the same *Desirée* that he had known as a mischievous child and a sentimental fiancée. She had not really altered very much since the days when he regarded her and her family as a blessing sent from Heaven above. She was perhaps a little fuller in the figure, and her old playfulness and *joie-de-vivre* were no longer apparent. She was, in fact, looking very sad, as though she had been crying.

As soon as he sat down, she advanced to his chair and knelt down at his feet.

"Oh, Sire, why are you so cruel to your little *Eugenie* who still loves you with her whole heart ? Who has loved you since the days when you were poor and despised by all. Sire, I belong to France just as I belong to you. Paris is my home. Paris is warm. Paris contains everything that I love. Why, then, must I go to Sweden, which is far away, which is cold and where I have no friends ? I should be more miserable in Stockholm than *Julie* is in Spain. Listen to me, Sire. Listen to me and let me remain in Paris."

So Bernadotte had been talking to her ! Telling her she must go with him to Sweden. That was very stupid of him, because he ought to have learned something about these two girls by now ! And *Julie* was miserable in Spain ! He was not surprised to hear that, for she had always claimed that she was too delicate for the journey. These two girls were really very difficult indeed to manage !

"Little *Eugénie*, I have never doubted your loyalty and affection. But the Swedish situation is unusual and full of problems. Marshal Bernadotte has certain qualities, and some of them are very good qualities. In many respects he is like an Englishman rather than a Frenchman. It is good for him to go to Sweden, and I should like you to go with him, mainly because I think that you are more French than he is." He bent forward and playfully pinched her on the ear, adding, "At the same time, I do not want to lose you, and I do not want to make you unhappy."

"In that case I will not go. No, I won't go, I won't, I won't. If my husband goes to Sweden, he must go alone."

"So be it then. He will go alone." Napoleon laughed and pressed her hand. At that particular moment he would have granted her anything she wanted. The break with Josephine was imminent, and

his affianced bride, the daughter of an Emperor, had hinted at profound contempt for both the Bonaparte and Beauharnais families. Napoleon was anxious to let her see that he had some respectable lady friends, and he hoped that the Clary girls would play their part. He and Desirée understood one another after that short interview better than they had ever done before. They parted good friends, and she accepted an invitation to bring her husband to dine with him at the Royal Palace.

It was an official dinner given in honour of the Crown Prince and Princess of Sweden, and for the first time in his life Bernadotte appeared in Swedish uniform. It was an imperial meal, but nobody could have called it cheerful or amusing. The Emperor concentrated his attentions on Desirée, leaving Josephine to entertain Bernadotte. The latter was not an easy task, for their positions were both delicate and uncomfortably alike. For months past Bernadotte and Josephine had been under a cloud, like a pair of schoolchildren on the verge of expulsion. The dinner was proof of the double dismissal which was about to take place; the man from his country, the woman from her husband. It is small wonder that conversation between them was impossible. When at last it was over, Bernadotte bid a tender farewell to this imperial but rather pathetic lady. He never saw her again.

Then followed the most emotional day in the whole of his life, the day when he returned to the Palace to pay his last official respects to his Chief and Emperor. His arrival at the Palace was greeted by a fanfare and salute. The gigantic courtyard was filled on one side by veterans of Italy and Egypt, on the other by the National Guard. The men on parade had been specially selected from the most famous regiments of the greatest army the world has ever known. It was as proud a day for them as it was for the great soldier in whose honour they were assembled.

Accompanied by his wife and son, Bernadotte passed through their ranks and entered another courtyard, where the Marshals of France had been lined up. Slowly and silently the small party made their way to the steps of the Palace, where they were greeted by the Emperor in person.

After a few words of greeting, the Emperor, in full view and hearing of the assembled force, addressed these words to Bernadotte :—

"I cherish the hope that your new interests will be in accord with your former duties. You are called to a great and noble destiny. Whatever the future may bring forth, your heart will always belong to France. My good wishes will accompany you, and if I can be of service to you, you may count on me."

He then turned to Desirée and took her by the hand, while speaking these words : "The tender love that you bear towards your son should make you accept your new position with pride and pleasure."

Lastly, he turned to the ten-year-old boy, who retained for many years to come an extremely vivid memory of being addressed by no less a person than the Great Emperor himself. "My child, you are destined to wear a crown. Some day you will feel its burden. So long as good fortune attends you, you will have no lack of admirers. I hope that you will never experience adversity, so that you may not learn to despise your fellow men."

When these three short speeches had been made, the Emperor shook hands with the Prince Royal. Thirteen and a half years had elapsed since that day in the Italian camp when they stood together for the first time. Small wonder that Bernadotte often said that at

this moment he could have thrown his arms round the neck of his Chief and unburdened his heart. But what could he have told him? There was far too much to say. As it was, he smothered his emotions, not without efforts, and turned away.

And now there was another ordeal for him, almost as heartrending as the last. He was now face to face with the marshals of France, whose names were the terror of Europe, and who were standing like a lot of subalterns awaiting the arrival of a senior officer. As he shook hands with each of them, a few short sentences of friendship and good cheer were exchanged. First there was Berthier, who had always disliked him. Then there was Davout, who abominated him, the man who had "let him down at Iena." Then there was Marmont, who was neither friend nor foe. Then there was old Lefevre, husband of Madame Sans-Gene, who was a ranker like himself, and who was a close friend. Lastly there was the most terrible moment of all. It was Ney, short, sturdy, erect, Marshal Ney, who loved him as his own soul. The eyes of these two warriors were filled with tears, and their voices so choked with emotion that neither could speak. Only the grip of hands, an iron grip, a soldier's grip that was far more eloquent than any words could ever have been.

At last it was over, and the three honoured guests stepped into their carriage. The man who had so often dreamed of the day of his release now saw it in reality, but it was through a mist of tears and regret. Soldiers can hate one another, as we all know, but they can love too, and the affection of old comrades after the supreme tests of battle and victory, is of great strength and long duration. As the carriage drew out of the square, he took one last look at the comrades by whose side he had spent over twenty-five years of his life. But he saw them not. It was not because they had gone, but simply because they were eclipsed. In that last look, all that he saw was the distant, familiar figure of a small man in a cocked hat an unbuttoned military cloak, standing as he had often seen him stand before, with his hands clasped behind his back.

And thus Bernadotte saw his Chief for the last time. This day had turned out very differently from what he thought it would be. He was surprised at finding himself to be the victim of his own emotions. He began to feel dazed and ill. He looked round, and there, at his side was his wife clutching at his arm, looking anxiously into his face, fearing that he was going to faint. Opposite him was his son, a snuffling schoolboy with a scarlet face, holding back his tears and trying to look like a man.

But there was more to come: for, as the carriage passed through the gates, the air was rent by a mighty cheer. It was the people of Paris. In his emotion he had forgotten about their existence, but now he saw for himself the faces of the many thousands who had written him words of encouragement and messages of hope. He was their property, too, he was their Obstacle-Man. He began to realise that there were thousands of widows and orphans as well as all the down-trodden and oppressed who centred their confidence on him and him alone. These were the people who believed that he was the one man that might save them from the grip of the tyrant whom they abhorred. He found himself overcome by another emotion, similar but yet different from what he had experienced at the Palace. As the carriage turned a corner he distinctly heard a cry, followed by the words "Don't leave us. Don't leave us. We want you in France."

By the time they reached home Bernadotte was almost in the state of collapse. He was affected as he had never been before. Just think of the things he had seen and heard on that dramatic morning: the Guard on parade, the words of the Emperor, the grip of the marshals and, lastly, the cry of the public. Where can one find the like in either history or fiction?

He would have liked to meditate on these things, but Desirée would not allow that. For one thing, there was the pressing matter of seasickness—always a serious problem for the French nation—and the alarming thought that in all his career Bernadotte had never yet crossed an ocean. He had two more days in France, and he spent the first at his country home with Desirée and Oscar. The second and last day was spent by the family with Julie and her daughters. On the following day, the 30th of September, 1810, at the age of forty-seven years, Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte left Paris for the purpose of fulfilling his destiny. As the coach drove across the frontier he was heard to say "Farewell, beloved France. I wonder if I shall ever see you again."

The emotions that he had felt in parting from his comrades, his family and his country, were not of very long duration. By the time he boarded the ship, his whole mind became fixed on the enterprise that he was about to undertake. He knew that rough storms and difficult times lay ahead, and yet he was eager and impatient to face whatever problems the future might bring. Perhaps also he may have thought that the long arm and ever-changing humour of the Emperor might recall him—bring him back to the life of tents and barracks. He did not want that.

He reached Helsingfors a month later, accompanied by three French aides-de-camp, and landed at the *preston*, where a large crowd had collected to welcome him. There he made his first speech. They liked it, although they did not understand it, for the new Crown Prince spoke only the French language.

"Gentlemen, the Swedish King and nation have bestowed on me a striking proof of their confidence and esteem. I have made every sacrifice to respond to it. I have left that France which has been the object of my existence till to-day. I have separated myself from the Emperor Napoleon, to whom a lively sense of gratitude and other ties attached me. It is not the hope of a crown that can compensate me for such sacrifices. No, gentlemen, I shall find compensation in the happiness of my new country.

"I come among you, throwing aside everything with an ardent desire to leave nothing undone that can contribute to your prosperity. I bring to the King, who is so deservedly loved by you all, a boundless devotion. Let us unite, Gentlemen, in the effort to fulfil his paternal wishes. And let us preserve unimpaired that national glory which you owe to the valour and virtue of his ancestry."

A few days later he reached Stockholm, where he made a State entry, and in the presence of the House of Parliament, was enrolled under the new name and title of Charles John, Crown Prince of Sweden. His speech on this occasion is far more like the Bernadotte that we already know.

"Bred in camps, I bring you a frank and loyal heart, an absolute devotion to the King of Sweden, and an ardent desire to do all in my power for my new country. I have seen war at close quarters and know its evils. I have seen the great Emperor, crowned with

so many victories and laurels, sighing for the olive branch of peace. It is not the extent of a State's dominions which contributes and constitutes its power and independence, but its laws, its commerce and its national spirit."

From the first, his relations with the old king were most cordial. The king recognised him as his adopted son, and never once offered any word of criticism against the acts and deeds of the Crown Prince, who in reality held the position of Prince Regent. Bernadotte's attitude towards the upper classes was rigidly polite, and he was most punctilious in observing to the letter all the forms, fads and peculiarities adopted by the Swedish Parliament. His attitude to the army and the lower classes was cordial in the extreme. From them he learned that he had many Swedish soldiers who had fought under Blücher and had been nervous after Lubeck had surrendered. But they had been so impressed by the justice and clemency of Bernadotte that they had made up their minds to get him into their country. In a similar way the Swedish merchants of the Hanseatic League had prospered under his guidance, and thus Bernadotte by merely following his own principles had walked right into the hearts of his new people.

The Press in London was very sarcastic, calling him the "latest of Bonaparte's puppet-kings," and foretelling that the appointment of a French Marshal to the Royal House of Sweden was bound to bring war and disaster to that country. London was more interested still in learning of the reactions of the Emperor Alexander towards the new king. It looked as if Sweden was certain to annex Finland, in which case London thought—and hoped—that Alexander might be induced to make war on both Sweden and France.

It was not long before letters began to reach Bernadotte from the Emperor, ordering him to stiffen the Continental System. Then followed an order to make war against England. Bernadotte called the Diet, read out the correspondence, and asked their advice. Their reply was that in the interests of peace and diplomacy, the Emperor's orders should be obeyed. Thus, at the beginning of 1811, Sweden followed the fashion of the rest of Europe by declaring war on England.

There have been many fantastic wars in history, but surely there has never been one quite so ridiculous as this. England just laughed at it, and Sweden laughed louder still. The contraband trade between the two countries went on just the same, in no way abated, but rather on an increased scale. Napoleon soon became angry and ordered that all Swedish ships in the Baltic should be taken, their cargoes confiscated and their crews pressed into the French service. Bernadotte began to realise that he was being treated with less respect than Joseph was receiving in Spain, Louis in Holland or Jerome in Westphalia. He found that he was slowly and relentlessly being driven into difficulties, for the chief result of the Emperor's policy was the creation of friction between the people of Sweden and their Crown Prince.

Throughout the year 1811, Bernadotte succeeded in keeping war from Sweden at the expense of a certain humiliation of national pride. At the close of that year he received a letter from the Czar Alexander addressing him as "Our Cousin," a name that pleased him considerably. After referring to Bernadotte's distinction by means of his talents, character and principles, the letter proceeded:—

"I desire not only your friendship but also your confidence. My esteem for you is very great, and dates from the time when you were only a general. Do not allow yourself to be influenced

by the fear of Russia with which people will try and impress you. Remember that the interest of Russia is bound up with the preservation of Sweden."

Bernadotte replied in suitable terms to his "Cousin, the Czar," and found that it was going to be very, very difficult for him to maintain peace. Russia was ignoring the blockade as much as Sweden, and was openly laughing at the Emperor's impotence in enforcing it. Although he had made every endeavour, with the whole strength of his nature, to remember that he was a Frenchman and to forget that there had ever been any animosity between the Emperor and himself, yet he found himself being compelled, partly by circumstances but more particularly by the behaviour of the Emperor, to incline towards England and Russia and away from the country of his birth.

Such was the position when the year 1810 drew to its close. What a remarkable change had been visited on this man, during the past twelve months! At Christmas, 1809, he was suffering from all the scratches and pinpricks left by the Battle of Wagram, but even in that bad time he never left the arena, but remained confident in his own talents and in his ultimate victory. And now, at Christmas, 1810, he had become Crown Prince and Heir Apparent to the throne of Gustavus Adolphus, the great little fighter and reformer.

There was no denying that he liked the Swedish people. He had his own ideas about Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, and he had hoped that some day he might be powerful enough to introduce them into France. They were quite different to the definition of Liberty as conceived in France or America, and it was a pleasant surprise for him to find that his ideas were identical with those of Sweden. But further, and in addition, Sweden had put those very ideas into practice and found them to be very good. He also learned that England, a tiny island with a population of only about ten million people, had determined to meet, beat and destroy Bonaparte, and that the realisation of this objective was not nearly as impossible as Bernadotte had always been led to believe.

If we look back on the staggering career of this man, it seems as if some unseen power, which Napoleon would have called Destiny, had been present to guard him from all the perils, the defeats and disappointments that had been crowded into his short but adventurous life. Was it that same Destiny that had decreed him to be the colleague of the greatest looters and thieves in history, that also finally brought him to the steps of a throne with his character untarnished and his principles unimpaired?

CHAPTER XXI

JOSEPH IN PROFUNDIS

At the time of the negotiations for Bernadotte's Swedish appointment an extraordinary incident took place on the shores of the Mediterranean. After the return of Lolotte from Paris, Lucien decided to remove himself and his family to Sicily, which Murat had failed to annex, and which was therefore a free and independent island. He duly embarked, but his ship sailed into heavy weather and was a victim of distress. She was ultimately rescued and captured by a British frigate, which towed

her into Malta, where the passengers and crew spent the whole of the winter of 1810.

In the following year Lucien and his family were brought to England and landed at Plymouth. At first they were uneasy as to what might befall them as prisoners of war. The reaction of the British public after "netting a Bonaparte" turned out to be peculiar and most interesting. Lucien and Lolotte were met on arrival by a gentleman of the King's household, who drove them through the town, where they received a tremendous welcome, accompanied by cheers and acclamations. Needless to say, Lucien was utterly bewildered by this reception and thought that some mistake had been made. The attitude of the English is best seen in the curious wording of the contemporary Press:—

Lucien Bonaparte can now consider himself safe, and as long as he exists, will be a living reproach to Bonaparte. He will be a new example to add to the many others which prove the cruelty of his brother. If Bonaparte prophesies our ruin, we will answer him, "Your brother, Lucien, trusted us. He thinks we shall last long enough for him and he will probably live just as long as you."

Wherever he went he was met with a warm and friendly welcome, accompanied by sincere sympathy for the man who "came to us, because he found his own Empire uninhabitable." His family was more lionised in England than it had ever been in France or Italy. He bought a place in Shropshire, near Ludlow Castle, and lived peacefully and comfortably in England for three years, after which he returned to France.

Lucien's adventures were described by Julie to King Joseph on her arrival for a short stay in Madrid. Joseph was delighted to see her, for he was not at all comfortable in his new kingdom, where he was being made to feel like a foreigner in exile. He was fully aware that all sorts of exciting things regarding Josephine and Bernadotte had been happening in Paris, and he was irritated and annoyed at not having been able to take part in them. This was particularly the case when he listened to the story that Julie unfolded.

"The Emperor gave him a special day, all for himself, and all the National Guard and all the marshals were lined up to bid him farewell. The poor man nearly broke down with emotion. He spent his last day in France with me and the girls, and kept saying how much he missed you. It was strange to see him going away, all alone, with just an aide-de-camp or two. Desirée has found means of keeping him well-informed about everything the Emperor is doing or intends to do. She is a better spy for him than she ever was for Napoleon."

"How about the Empress?"

"After the Emperor returned from Wagram he called a meeting at his Palace to all the family in order to listen to a statement from the old woman. Hortense and Louis were there and so were Jerome and Catherine. I was invited but I told them I was not well. If you had been there, I might have gone, but I couldn't possibly go alone. I am glad that I did not go for it was all rather sad. She made a statement on oath that it was for the good of the country that she wished to have her marriage dissolved. . . . Then in the New Year the Emperor married again, first by proxy in Vienna and later in reality in Paris. Marie Louise has lovely hair and a nice skin, and is quite pretty. The Emperor worships her and gives her presents all through the day: either clothes or flowers or sweets."

"How about the brothers and sisters?"

"They simply loathe her because she won't allow them to come near the Palace. She snubs them on every possible occasion, and they are all afraid of her. When that baby was born last March, I was really pleased, partly because the Emperor was the father of an heir, but mainly because there is now little chance of my ever being Empress of France. But is it not strange that he should have got rid of them both at the same time? The man he hated and the woman he loved. . . . Bernadotte and Josephine . . . Josephine and Bernadotte. . . I wonder if he was right."

"And when is he going to help us in Spain?"

"He never talks of Spain now. He says Spain is a festering sore, an ulcer. His whole talk is the danger from Russia. He hates Alexander now, though not so long ago he was always praising him. Apparently the Czar and Bernadotte have come to some agreement and are going to do more trade with England. It looks as if the Emperor was going to fight Sweden next and Russia immediately afterwards."

"He is making a great mistake. He cannot fight two wars at once. He won't believe me when I tell him how serious things are in Spain. Each marshal is working to drive me out and become King of Spain himself. He won't believe it, but it is true. Our army here is not fighting as it used to and, Julie, make no mistake about it, this Wellington is a very good general. We are suffering because there is no chief to command us. The Emperor is not interested. Bernadotte is in Sweden, Murat in Naples, and Soult is not up to it. The others are lucky to be where they are, for if they were here they would find it hard to keep their reputations."

At this moment they were interrupted by a footman, who announced that a French officer desired an audience with His Majesty. A look of annoyance passed over the face of the king.

"I have had no information that any French officer was to see me this morning."

"He says it is a matter of urgent importance."

It must here be revealed that Joseph was not a very good king. He was anxious to lead, but he was no leader. Similarly he tried to play certain parts, but he was no actor. When he was away from his imperial brother he tried to play the part of Napoleon. When he was in the presence of his imperial brother he tried to play that of Bernadotte. But Joseph was no emperor and he was certainly not an Obstacle-Man.

"I have come to Your Majesty on a matter of great urgency," Joseph was glaring with anger at the French officer. His hands were clasped behind his back, and he looked exactly like the Emperor.

"It must be of outstanding importance for you to disturb my privacy in this way. What is it? Don't waste my time." His manner was truculent, and he spoke these words in a high-pitched voice.

"It is indeed of outstanding importance. English spies are unusually active in the South of Spain, and there are strong rumours that they intend to invade either Tarifa or Cadiz."

"How dare you?" Joseph's shoulders were heaving with rage. "How dare you intrude your presence on so trivial an excuse? You wear the uniform of the Emperor, and yet you come to my Palace on a matter of flippancy which is contrary to my instructions."

"Pardon me, Sire," came the reply, spoken in firm but respectful tones, "but I am only carrying out the orders given me by the Emperor himself."

"The Emperor. . . Oh, ah, the Emperor. . . What did he say?" The high-pitched voice had changed to something more conversational.

"The Emperor ordered me, Sire, to report in person to his royal brother in Madrid if my suspicions were aroused by any action on the part of the English in Spain."

"Oh, he said that, did he? You are quite sure that he said it. Well, perhaps he is right." Joseph turned away, muttering that the English were an infernal nuisance. He turned to the officer, and he looked like a martyr who was being persecuted. "Well, you have performed your duty. Your information may be important. I shall have to tell Soult or Massena or somebody. They must deal with it. I myself only command the forces in the capital, and so I can do nothing. But there . . . there . . . I thank you for your information, my captain, and I will mention your name to my imperial brother."

The French officer bowed and retired, enabling Joseph to return to Julie. But the door had hardly closed before the footman returned and announced that the Chief of Police of Madrid was requesting an audience.

This time Joseph was really angry. He knew the Chief of Police to be a lazy lout of a fellow, who drank, gambled and never did any work. Joseph very nearly said *Menana*, which was the only Spanish word he knew, and meant to-morrow. But he remembered that he had been using that word rather too frequently of late and refrained. He reluctantly consented to see his visitor and determined to give the man a lesson.

"I regret to report, Your Majesty, many disturbances in Madrid. The French flag has been torn down from the City Hall and French officers have been insulted in the streets." The Spanish Chief of Police was a very fat man, who wore an ill-fitting uniform and had apparently a strong dislike for either washing or shaving. His words caused the king to lose his temper. He jumped out of his chair and advanced to the Spanish administrator.

"But you, *Senor*," he hissed, "you are Chief of Police. What the devil were you doing?"

"My men are doing their duty. But we cannot prevent these things. There are not enough of us."

Joseph waved his hands and gesticulated with rage. Never in his life had he seen a country that for indolence and incompetency could compare with Spain. But the *Don Senor* was not alarmed at the new outburst, for the old man was far too tired. He had caroused late into the night, and his massive body was a tremendous weight for his little legs. If he had been invited to sit down, he would have done so gladly. But he had not been asked, and he could only reflect that these Bonapartes had no manners.

"Then you must appoint more of them. Bully them, force them, shoot them, if necessary. I don't care."

"But the Government will not pay——"

"Bah . . . the Government will not pay. I have heard all that before. Now, listen to me. We must get money by taxation, like the English do. We must tax all the rich Spaniards——"

"Sire, since the French came to Spain, there are no rich Spaniards."

Joseph was not going to stand that. It was *lèse majesté*, or in other words it was damned impertinence. "Look here, you . . . you . . . Chief of Police. Are you telling me that you know of no rich—er

commoners in Spain who could be taxed without giving any trouble? Answer me that."

The Chief of Police scratched his head and then replied with alarming simplicity, "Only yourself, Sire."

The king had not expected that reply. It completely non-plussed him and he turned away. The manner that he had assumed had been quite successful in Naples, but it did not seem to go down in Spain. After all, this wretched nation only seemed to think of its women and its bullfights. He looked out on his palace grounds and then murmured, more in sorrow than anger.

"Myself, yes, of course, myself. And my little children, too. Thank you, Signor Casuro, you may go. But before you depart, I would have you to know that if you cannot do your duties more successfully, I must look round for somebody else who can."

With the departure of the portly officer, Joseph was enabled to return to his interrupted conversation with Julie.

"When you get back to Paris, Julie, I want you to talk to the Emperor about me. I am tired of Spain, and I want to be back with you all again."

"Oh, I don't think he would let you leave Madrid. It would look too much like desertion, and you know the Emperor. He has never forgotten all the things Bernadotte said after the Egyptian campaign."

"I know that. But there are all these rumours that he is going to invade Russia. If that should take place, somebody would be wanted to take charge of Paris in the event of trouble in the capital. Mention that to him, Julie. I know this, that I should far rather be Governor of Paris than King of Spain."

Not long afterwards Julie returned to Paris with her two daughters. It is of course impossible to say whether she spoke to the Emperor or not on this point. The fact remains that within a few months of her departure, ex-King Joseph was at her side, filling a new appointment which was called "the Lieutenant-General of France and Governor of Paris." The relinquishment of the Crown of Spain was, however, not due to the persuasiveness of Julie, but rather to the military leadership of the Duke of Wellington.

The Peninsular War lasted a long time—over four years. And in that period, though the French have never liked to admit it, there arose one of the greatest generals in history. In the past five hundred years there have only been four soldiers deserving of that title. They were Marlborough, Frederick the Great, Napoleon and Wellington. Frederick believed in sending armies by diverse routes to cut off the enemy's line of retreat and then making a vigorous frontal attack. Marlborough liked to attack the centre of his enemy, create a gap through which he poured his force, and later to deal with the flanks. Napoleon adopted both these principles, but added the elements of surprise and speed, along with deadly artillery accuracy. Lastly came Wellington. He differed from the others in that he always "kept a card up his sleeve." He seldom engaged an enemy with his full force, and always kept large reserves in the background which he threw into the battle at the vital moment. No commander in the world has ever been so quick or so accurate at recognising that vital moment.

The day came when Joseph was forced to take a command in the field, the day which culminated in a French disaster, far greater than either Baylen or Vimiero. Joseph's previous military career had consisted of a few weeks in command of a battalion during the invasion

preparations at Boulogne, and he had been removed owing to military incompetence. Then, as King of Spain, he took command of an army and went forth to battle against Wellington at Vittoria. The only command he gave in that battle was to withdraw his army to a place which lay in a basin surrounded by high hills. When the British occupied these hills and let loose their artillery—well, that was the end of King Joseph's military career.

Joseph left Madrid with far less dignity and far greater precipitancy than when he arrived. He was so anxious to get out quickly that he refused to go by coach, preferring to go on horseback. His lackeys packed his private property in waggons, which were also laden with the belongings of his personal retinue and his "harem." All these waggons fell into the hands of the British troops. A British cavalry regiment possesses a souvenir of him in the shape of a bedroom article, made of solid silver. It is to be seen in the Officers' Mess on regimental guest nights, and it is familiarly known as King Joseph's Jerry.

The defeat of the French at Vittoria, followed by the flight of the king, put an end to all Napoleon's schemes for the conversion of Spain into a French colony. His interference in the politics of that country, which was totally unnecessary, was one of the main causes of his ultimate downfall. The Duke of Wellington, whose brilliant campaign had brought it about, said modestly that "Bonaparte was beaten by the odium and rivalry that the French marshals bore against one another."

Napoleon, however, thought otherwise. His first reaction was to throw all the blame on his well-meaning but unfortunate brother. "All the follies," he wrote, "are due to the mistaken consideration that I have shown to the king, who not only does not know how to command, but does not know his own value enough to leave the military command alone."

Those were the roughest words he ever used against his favourite brother. Later, when he was an exile, he often repeated that "it was the Spanish ulcer that killed me."

CHAPTER XXII

ALEXANDER AND BERNADOTTE

WE have now come to the year 1812, the year which has been made famous in story and song throughout the ages: the year when Bernadotte was forced to an ugly decision and a vital test; the year when the world was introduced to Russian winters and Russian guerillas; the year when the Grand Army was defeated and almost annihilated.

In January of that year, while the Northern winter was at its height, the Emperor Napoleon, without a word of warning invaded the territory of Pomerania, which had for centuries belonged to Sweden. The marshal chosen for this deliberate aggression was none other than Davout, the man who detested Bernadotte and who had been solely responsible for the rancour after Iena. There was very little resistance. Davout seized all the ships in Swedish ports, disarmed and disbanded the Swedish garrisons, plundered the Swedish homes, and sent many hundreds of cases of valuables back to France. This was bad enough

for Bernadotte. But insult was added to injury when the Crown Prince received a note from the Emperor, demanding his full co-operation and support, and giving the most alluring promises of a huge slice of Russian territory, a magnificent Russian subsidy, and a complete indemnity for all his French endowments.

What could Bernadotte do? The defence of Pomerania was out of the question, for it would have entailed leading an army across the frozen Baltic in the depth of winter. That was obviously impossible, and so he had to think of something else, and his decision has a twentieth-century ring about it. He despatched a couple of notes, one of them being addressed to the Emperor of France and the other to the Emperor of Russia. The first contained these words:—

Sire, although I am a Swede by the ties of honour, duty and religion, my feelings identify me with that beautiful France where I was born, and which I have served faithfully since my childhood. Every event of my life in this kingdom and all the honours of which I am the recipient, remind me of that glory which was the principal cause of my elation, and I do not disguise from myself the fact that Sweden, in electing me, wished to pay a tribute of esteem to the French people.

"I intend to have an army of 40,000 men, and I shall lead them wherever honour and destiny may call me. In such an event, it may become an honour to be the rival of the Emperor, since Pompey, in spite of defeat, gained no little glory. Still, I should prefer the honour of being his friend."

This letter revealed to Napoleon, that although Bernadotte was nominally a Crown Prince, yet he still retained the claws of the Obstacle Man. But the Emperor dismissed the Pompeian reference with contempt. "Let him march. Let him march wherever Sweden and Norway call him."

His note to the Czar was more abstract than personal:—

"In the midst of this universal despair the eyes of men turn towards Your Imperial Majesty with confidence and hope. So long as strength lasts, success depends on willingness to act. Those whose spirits are scared are incapable of reflection and yield to the force that terrifies or attracts them."

There was nothing abstract in the Czar's reply, which was friendly in the extreme:—

"I attach special value to Your Royal Highness' esteem, and I desire to make your personal acquaintance. You will always find in me the friend who will emulate you, but will never be the rival of your glory."

Such were the sentiments of the three big men on the eve of the greatest gamble and greatest disaster in military history. Over in London it was taken for granted that the invasion of Russia was imminent. The seizure of Pomerania was just the curtain-raiser of something far greater and far more deadly. Napoleon knew that with Pomerania denied to Sweden, his left flank was secure and immune from any danger that Bernadotte might perpetrate.

The winter of 1812 turned to spring, which was marked by peace and quietness all over Europe. The spring turned to summer, the snow melted and the sun shone. And then on the 22nd of June, ominous date alike for Napoleon and his later imitator, the Grand Army was put into motion and set forth on its mightiest enterprise. The goal was not

Rome, nor Cairo, nor Vienna, nor Berlin, nor Madrid, nor even Stockholm. This time it was Moscow.

It was the largest army that the world of that day had ever seen : it consisted of 200,000 Frenchmen, 150,000 Germans, 80,000 Italians, 60,000 Poles, 50,000 Austrians, while levies from the occupied territories of Holland, Spain and Switzerland brought the grand total up to 600,000 men. London was startled by these figures, and was most apprehensive of the outlook. It was the largest army in the world under the greatest military genius of all ages, and it was attacking a country where the people were backward, their officers corrupt and their Emperor a fool. It was thought that Alexander would tremble at this mighty array : but he did not. It was believed that once this force was on the move, he would ask for peace : but he did not.

The Russians had apparently two armies, and it was the object of Napoleon to bring one of them to open battle. He would certainly have done so in the early days of the campaign if it had not been for an order which had either been negligently misconstrued or deliberately ignored by his brother Jerome, who for the first time in his life was being given a taste of warfare. Anyhow, the Russian Army managed to slip out of a trap that had been set for them and Jerome was brought to book and severely admonished. In reply he dramatically resigned his command, literally throwing it in the face of his brother, and went home to the pleasures and delights of Westphalia.

It was a very peculiar war. Alexander was anxious to fight ; many times he gave the order to fight, but the Russian Army refused to fight. Instead, they burned down their houses and retired to the interior, leaving not a morsel of food for man or beast. On July 25th Napoleon reported from Vitepsk that he was "on the eve of great events," but on July 26th, the Russian Army had slipped off again. A few days later he was in Smolensk, but even then he had not been able to bring them to battle.

At Smolensk he was faced with a question of outstanding importance. Should he pause and dig in before the winter ? Or should he push straight ahead to Moscow ? Napoleon gave long and serious thought to these alternatives before making his final and fatal decision. Moscow was only three hundred miles away, the pace of the Grand Army was speedy, and the surrender of Moscow would inevitably be followed by the surrender of Russia. After that, Alexander would fall into line with the Continental System and England would be brought to her knees.

So he decided to push ahead and on the River Borodino, less than a hundred miles from the capital, the Russians did just exactly what he wanted them to do. They stood and fought. On the one side was the genius of the Emperor supported by the experience of Davout, Ney, Victor and Eugene Beauharnais, all of whom were reliable generals, though none of them possessed the military glamour of the trio of thrusters, Soult, Bernadotte and Murat. Against them was a shoddy, ill-equipped rabble of men without leaders and armed with out-of-date weapons. The battle was distinguished by a terrific cavalry charge which the Russians with outstanding courage succeeded in halting ; but it was followed almost immediately by another of even greater weight and speed which pierced and crumbled their lines. After this victory at the Borodino, there was no further obstacle, and Napoleon marched into Moscow, which he occupied on September 14th.

The news of Borodino came as a stinging blow to Alexander, who was at that time in the neighbourhood of St. Petersburg. He was in a

very difficult position, without a friend in the world. His many vacillations to and from Napoleon had made him utterly distrusted by England, which was, however, giving certain support in carrying on his resistance. By the beginning of September his position was ominous, and there was only one thing left for him to do. He pocketed his pride and appealed to Bernadotte to meet him at a personal interview.

Bernadotte gladly accepted, and the conference took place at Abo and lasted for three days. It was the first time that Bernadotte had ever met a real emperor on equal terms. He had seen many that had been deposed and many others that were just puppets, like himself. But the Czar of all the Russias did not belong to either of these categories.

"You have heard of the invasion of my people. You have heard how the Grand Army started from Vilna and moved at such a pace that they were in Smolensk before the end of July."

"But up to then," said Bernadotte, "I understand that there had been no pitched battle." Bernadotte liked the look of the Czar. The two men were both tall and clean-shaven. They both had long, wavy hair, but that of the Czar was fair and that of Bernadotte was jet black.

"None at all. The Russian Army was still intact. But for that matter so also was his. My people just burned their houses and villages and fled before him."

"That sort of warfare must have irritated him a great deal," Bernadotte chuckled at the thought. "He has never met it before and he would not like it. Modern armies require food for men and horses."

"He is getting no food from Russia—not a mouthful." Alexander smiled and it was a most attractive smile. "But now I have learned that he is in Moscow, and that may be serious."

"But why? Why should that be serious?" Bernadotte leaned forward, fixing his ally with his piercing gaze, "unless you mean that it is serious for Napoleon. It is my belief, Sire, he is already lost, though the taking of Moscow may be the most spectacular act of his whole career." These words were spoken with great intensity, but there was a look of gloom on the face of the Czar.

"He has penetrated very deeply into Russia."

"The further he goes, the further he will have to come back. And, mark my words, that will not be easy. He *will* retire because he *must* retire, or else his army will die of cold in the Russian winter."

At these words a curious thing happened. Alexander had been watching Bernadotte closely while he was speaking them. He realised that Bernadotte was expressing his belief—not merely his hope—and immediately his gloomy expression brightened. He bent forward and clasped the hand of his colleague.

"You have spoken, my dear Cousin," Bernadotte almost blushed at this unfamiliar title, "and your words are perfectly true. But nobody knows that except our two selves. Even the English think that Russia will be beaten." At the absurdity of such a thought, Alexander burst into loud and prolonged laughter, and Bernadotte joined him. But he soon became serious again. "But that, my Cousin, is not the reason of this meeting. We both know that the French Army will injure itself very dangerously without actually committing suicide. Tell me, would you agree that this invasion of Russia is a serious crime that should never be allowed to occur again?"

"In my opinion the invasion of Russia is a serious crime that should never, never be repeated again."

"Then, when the retreat begins, we must be ready to obliterate and destroy the French Army. We can do this. We have the men, we have the weather, we have the spirit, there is just one thing that we lack . . . we want a leader." Bernadotte blushed with pride at the inference. "Why deny it? Russia is a backward country that is in want of a leader."

"Cousin, I will unfold a secret. I am a Frenchman, and a soldier who has received his training under the greatest military captain of all ages. I know every device that he uses to achieve his victories, and he knows that, too. That is why he separated me from my home, my wife, my family, and my comrades-in-arms. My heart is aching for revenge. When he falls, and, mark my words, he *will* fall, because he *must* fall, then the whole of France will fall with him and the French Crown will become the property of whoever is most worthy to wear it."

"And that, my Cousin," said Alexander, who had fallen a victim to the Gascon voice and eloquence, "and that will be yourself. I shall do all in my power to help you to wear it."

The Crown of France! It had been his whole life's dream to win and wear the Crown of France. The Czar was the first of them all to penetrate Bernadotte's dream and ambition. Not only that, but he was ready to fan the flames. But the truth was that in this short interview the Czar had already recognised the sterling character of the Obstacle Man, now placed in high authority in a country unpleasantly near to himself. The idea of Bernadotte as King of France was more favourable to him than Bernadotte as King of Sweden!

And even while the two men were speaking, history had grasped a brand of fire, a few hundred miles away. Smoke was emerging from the buildings of Moscow, rising upwards and dissolving into a great vacuum of void and nothingness. Napoleon saw it and all his hopes of a speedy conquest mingled with the self-same clouds in their upward flight. Moscow was being sacrificed. That meant that in addition to lack of food there would be lack of accommodation, and a Russian winter approaching! What was he to do? Would he stop there or would he retreat? For the first and only time in his life he decided to sacrifice glory to the needs of circumstance. He decided to retreat.

From the above it will be seen that for the second time in his life Bernadotte had been the Cassandra of Napoleon's fortunes—or misfortunes—just as he had been in the Egyptian campaign. The only difference was that in Egypt his views had been known only in the narrow circle of family acquaintances, while in Russia they were given forth to the whole world. The Russian campaign had been a major disaster for Napoleon, and a grim denial of the invincibility of French armour. The only bright spot was the genius and valour shown by Marshal Ney in rearguard actions during that dreadful retreat. Before the beginning of 1814 Alexander was able to inform Bernadotte that his territories had been cleared of the foreign invader, and that the Emperor was back in Dresden with a decimated army, reduced alike in numbers, morale and discipline.

Bernadotte now found himself joined by his most enthusiastic political supporter in France, the lady who had given him such animated support at the time of Brumaire that she had been exiled from France at the order of the Emperor. This was Madame de Stael, the noted

writer, who described herself as "Swiss by origin, French by adoption, Swedish and Italian by her marriages, British in her political ideas, and German in her literary tastes." In other days she had been twitted for being in love with Bernadotte, and it had been said that she would have gladly poisoned Desirée, if she had thought there was a chance of taking her place. She offered him her services, telling him that it was her life's ambition to take part in the firing line under his orders. But her hero gave her but little encouragement, and merely said "If I were Charles VII, I would be tempted to ask you to play the part of Joan of Arc, but the battlefield is no place for you. Give me your pen as an ally. It will be worth 500,000 men to me."

Alexander was as good as his word, and after the Russian victory proclaimed the name of Bernadotte to the whole world. And so, in the early days of 1814, we find Bernadotte, for the first time in his life, as the recipient of esteem and reverence from all in his immediate surroundings. It was a pleasant experience, and had the effect of reviving all the old dreams of rescuing a stricken Europe from the chains and slavery that had been imposed on her by the tyranny and ambition of a tyrant.

He became acquainted with the Federation of the Peoples, who shared his political views, and began to realise that if destiny called on him to head the resistance he would have to command armies composed of Swedes, Englishmen, Russians, Austrians and Prussians. He was particularly interested in the Englishman, for his few months in Sweden had taught him that the Englishman had a mind and purpose of his own, and was not likely to welcome a Frenchman as his chief. At the same time he was very anxious to try the experiment. He had not exaggerated when he told Alexander at Abo that he knew every trick and device of Napoleon, but the Englishman had always refused to believe in the military infallibility of Napoleon. The more he thought of it, the more necessary it seemed to be to have some French general who would interpret his orders to the foreigners, if he should be called on to take command.

In the spring of 1812 he put an army in commission for the purpose of invading Pomerania and ejecting Davout and his Frenchmen from Swedish territory. But before he set out, he sent a messenger to an old friend and a former comrade, who had left France and taken up residence in the United States of America.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FINAL ROUND

In July, 1813, a passing wave of enthusiasm swept over Stockholm when the city prepared to welcome a French general whom the reader met at the time of Brumaire. It was General Moreau, former colleague of Bernadotte in claiming Napoleon as a deserter from the army of Egypt and later exiled by Napoleon to America.

Bernadotte had high hopes of this man, whom he remembered as an experienced general and militant politician against Napoleon. To prove his faith in his old comrade he had arranged a large reception, but at the first meeting his hopes were dashed to the ground. The years of exile in a money-worshipping country had produced its effect,

and turned Moreau into a rabid pessimist in his attitude towards anyone who dared to offer resistance to the Emperor. He had become imbued with hatred towards the British, and had developed into one of those men who talk much but do little. He had grown soft. When Bernadotte unfolded his plans for the recapture of Pomerania, Moreau could only reply, "Well, I will help you all I can, but I think you will fail."

Every day that passed seemed to add difficulty to Bernadotte's position. Though he was virtually in the camp of the Allies, he could feel no cordiality towards them. The Swedes were, of course, behind him; Alexander had proved as good as his word and there was no doubt that the Russians would accept his military leadership. But there it ended. There were two other Allies, the Prussians and the British. The Prussian Army was under Blücher, who was lionised by his own country as a military genius, but was regarded by Bernadotte as a third-rate general since his surrender at Lubeck. Lastly, there were the British. They had given financial assistance to both Russia and Sweden when Russia was invaded, but now they were insisting on certain rights in Pomerania where they desired to hold a kind of watching brief, enabling them to be both observers and critics. They were represented by a group of Staff Officers—of the "red tab" and "good show" variety—and adopted a most cynical attitude towards Bernadotte, whom they regarded as "Boney's latest puppet." When he tried to persuade them to find a post for Moreau, he was given a freezing reception which deeply offended him.

Napoleon was well aware of these difficulties, and was convinced that Bernadotte would never have the pluck to invade and recapture Pomerania. But in this case the Emperor was wrong. Bernadotte had defied Napoleon in camp, in council chamber and in public, and had by now discovered *that it paid to be an Obstacle Man*, and the discovery left him without fear. He was perfectly willing to accept the challenge of Napoleon on the battle field. Fortunately for him the problem of Moreau settled itself. Bernadotte found him a post as liaison officer between the Swedes and Russians, but he died a few days later as the result of an accident.

In August, 1813, Bernadotte sailed from Sweden and landed at the head of a large army in Pomerania. Two French armies, under Davout and Oudinot, rose to challenge him, but he deftly avoided them. He had decided that the time and place of action would be decided by himself and not by his enemies. He contacted his Allies and found that the British Staff Officers were sour and surly towards him, while Blücher was arrogant and hostile. Blücher had appointed himself Commander-in-Chief, and told Bernadotte to accept his orders. That was, of course, out of the question.

Bernadotte now realised that he would have to play an entirely independent part in the forthcoming campaign. He would not expect assistance from his neighbours, neither would he give it. At the same time he called a conference which was attended alike by British and Prussian officers, and made a statement which filled them with horror.

"In the forthcoming fight, Gentlemen, you will be up against an army which is difficult to defeat in battle. There is only one weakness in that army, and that lies in the command. If you are in the presence of the French and have reliable information that they are under the marshals, then you may take the risk and attack. You will stand a reasonable chance. But if you have information that they are under

the Emperor in person, then I advise you to retire, and manoeuvre. That is, if he will allow you."

"Are you suggesting that the soldiers should retreat in the presence of the enemy?" The question was put by an outraged British officer.

"Yes, sir, that is exactly what I am suggesting."

"Do you presume to say that we have not got better generals than your Emperor?" The question was put by an outraged Prussian officer.

"Yes, sir, that is exactly what I mean."

After that statement, it was of course out of the question that the Allied forces would ever want to recognise a man who was a self-confessed coward and poltroon. But Bernadotte's words were the result of thirteen years of close study and experience. The Duke of Wellington reached exactly the same conclusions in a considerably shorter space of time. "The marshals are always quarrelling and are, therefore, open to attack. But when Bonaparte is present in person, he is as good as another 50,000 men in the enemy's camp."

Napoleon was well aware of the difficulties that would confront Bernadotte from his Allies, and he thought that the former would follow his usual course and become prudent at the last moment. When he heard that Bernadotte had landed, he was both surprised and annoyed. He did not like the idea of any independent command for Bernadotte. With any of the other marshals it would have been easy, but not with Bernadotte. The proper place for Bernadotte was with Soult and Murat, who hated him. That was the first point, and the second touched him almost as deeply. He also had a number of foreign troops in his own command, and as a result of recent defeats they were inclined to be troublesome. He did not like to think how such troops might behave in a serious action. Bernadotte was a difficult fellow to replace.

The late summer of 1813 saw these two great soldiers in the ring together for the first and last time in their lives. The contest opened, as all great conquests do, in gentle taps and sparring for position. In other words it was extensive manoeuvring. On many occasions Napoleon offered his opponent excellent chances of successful attack, but Bernadotte only withdrew and avoided action. Napoleon took no notice of Blücher at all, while the English Staff Officers were sarcastic at the Crown Prince's evasions. And so it went on for several weeks until at last a situation began to arise wherein Bernadotte recognised the possibilities of development along the lines of the Iena-Lübeck campaign.

On the 16th of October Blücher attacked the French Army at a village called Wachau and spent the day in fighting a bloody but indecisive battle. Bernadotte's army took no part in this affray at all, but he used the day by moving stealthily into a place that blocked Napoleon's line of retreat. On the 17th he learned that the French Army was tired and battle-weary. On the 18th he attacked in force.

This was the Battle of Leipzig. This was the battle when Bernadotte's army, fresh, lively, enthusiastic, flung themselves on the tired hordes of the Emperor. All the squadrons and platoons of Murat, Victor, Marmont and Ney were crashed to pulp in the vigorous onslaught of these Swedes who were burning for battle, tired of retirements and thirsting for glory. They pierced the French lines, cutting their way through to the foreign reserves. The climax came when the foreign division of the French Army, which included many Saxons, showed signs of wavering. It appears that during the fight they received infor-

mation that their enemy was being commanded by the same chief who had stood up for them in his famous order after Wagram. They promptly turned and mutinied. Raising the cry of "Bernadotte . . . Bernadotte . . . Bernadotte," they turned on their French officers and poured bullets into the ranks of those who had been their allies only a few minutes before.

The Battle of Leipzig has been called the Battle of Nations, owing to the huge number of nationalities represented in the armies of both sides. It would have been better known in history if its greatness had not been dimmed by that of Waterloo, which took place eighteen months later. It was Bernadotte's own day: the greatest day in his whole military career. The climax came on the 19th of October, when the victorious Allies entered the town of Leipzig. They were met by wild cheering and the joyful peals of the church bells, and repaired to the central square, where the leaders greeted one another. They bore high-sounding titles such as the King of Prussia, the Emperor of Russia, General Blucher and, of course, the English Staff Officers. While they were all posing and wearing the vacant expressions that all soldiers wear on such occasions, the whole air was rent by a mighty cheer, which echoed down the narrow streets and across the open places. It was Bernadotte! He entered the square, dismounted from his horse and approached the leaders on foot. As he drew near, the Czar suddenly dashed forward to greet him, threw his arms round his neck and shouted in a voice loud enough for both Prussian and Englishman to hear, "You see, my Cousin, this is our rendezvous, and you and I are keeping it together, just as we had arranged."

Bernadotte accepted his greeting and politely shook hands with the other military chiefs. But it was quite clear that he had no intention of posing along with them, and after a short while he remounted and rode away. He made straight for the French wounded and prisoners, and gave them money from his own purse. Most of them accepted it with gratitude, but a few of them snarled and called him a traitor.

The Allied leaders wished that Bernadotte might accompany them in their drive across Europe to Paris, but Bernadotte declined. He insisted that it was more important for him to mop up the French garrisons that still remained in Pomerania. Actually, he returned straight to Stockholm, where an even wilder reception awaited him. The Swedish population greeted him with a warmth such as is most unusual in northern countries. This country had been living under the shadow of war for fifteen years, with all the questions relating to Finland, Norway, Pomerania, Russia and the Continental System. And now, at one stroke, their Crown Prince had proved himself a greater general even than the invincible Emperor, and had brought them a peace which was destined to last for more than a century. It is hardly surprising that they were grateful to him.

At about the same time Napoleon returned to Paris, and it was a new experience for him to be greeted with a stone cold reception. The public ignored him, there was no sympathy from the Press while the family was in a state of distraction. They had apparently elected the Empress as their spokesman on his arrival; this lady threw herself on her knees and implored him to make peace. He replied that if he did that, he would have to surrender all Italy, Holland and the territory on both sides of the Rhine. He would never agree to do such a thing. She told him that Murat had turned traitor and had deserted the French Army after Leipzig and gone back to Naples, where he had made it

public that he was no longer interested in France but intended to devote the rest of his life to his kingdom. She also told him that Wellington, after driving the French Army out of Spain, had crossed the Pyrenees and now occupied a goodly portion of Southern France. But the more she pleaded, the more adamant he became. He definitely refused to ask for peace terms.

By the end of that year Denmark had handed over Norway to Sweden, Heligoland to England, and had herself joined the Allies against the French. Napoleon, using a clever mixture of persuasion and force, succeeded in raising and equipping an army of several hundreds of thousands for the purpose of defending the capital. This was accomplished in the face of the greatest difficulties, and the same army was used with deadly effect in holding up the Russian-cum-Prussian advance. French resistance had in fact been so successful that at the beginning of 1814 the Emperor gave a huge ball at the Palace of the Tuileries.

Once again the Palace was lit up with all the outward signs of gaiety and light. Once again the crowd peered at the carriages and the beautiful dresses, lined up outside the Palace. Once again the distinguished guests—which included our old friend, Marmont, now Duke of Ragusa—mounted the mighty staircase and were greeted by the Governor of Paris and his wife. Once again there was that familiar figure dressed in white, covered with a fur *pélisse*, short in height, but still smiling and perhaps a little rounder in the figure. It was Desirée mounting the staircase to be greeted by Joseph and Julie at the top.

After shaking hands with her sister and brother-in-law, Julie beckoned her sister. "Guess who has just arrived. An old friend of yours."

"Who is it?" said Desirée, looking ahead of her, "but, yes, it is Marmont, the Duke of Ragusa. I hear he has been doing wonderful things in battle. I hope he will come and talk to me."

A few minutes later her wish was realised, and she found herself chatting to her old friend in one of the alcoves.

"Everybody is talking of you," said Desirée, glowing with admiration, "and acclaiming your great skill in the defence of Paris. Let me also add my congratulations." Marmont bowed, and then raised his face. When he replied he addressed himself, not to Desirée, but to a point in the wall several inches above her head.

"I thank you, Princess. These are difficult times for us all, and, fortunately, my soldiers are reliable. . . . We have far too many traitors in the army to-day . . ."

"What do you mean by that?" Desirée did not like his tone.

"I mean, Princess, that all traitors should be cashiered from our army. There is only one place for traitors, my little Desirée, and that is . . . SWEDEN."

Desirée glanced at him for a moment and then turned on her heel and walked away with a dignity that was both regal and impressive. Marmont was left behind, standing there with a sickly and rather sheepish grin on his face.

She moved into the ballroom, where the volume of music was increasing, and the centre was being cleared for the arrival of the Emperor. She was surrounded by excessive gallantry and beauty, and yet . . . somehow she felt that there was some thing artificial and not quite genuine in all this peacock display. She could not forget a similar ball that she had once attended, which started well but was

ruined by the naughtiness of Junot. Was this ball to be ruined for her in like manner by Marmont?

Even while she was thinking these thoughts, a flush of excitement passed over the assembly, and every eye was turned towards the platform, where the high and gaily-uniformed officials were already beginning to appear. The band struck up and there was a real cheer when Joseph appeared, followed immediately by the Emperor, at whose side was a tiny boy with a large head and a mop of golden curls. Behind them came Julie and the Empress Marie-Louise.

Joseph motioned for silence and the Emperor bent down and took his little son in his arms. Again the guests cheered when they saw that the child was wearing the green uniform of the National Guard. When the noise subsided, Napoleon spoke, slowly and with great effect.

"Gentlemen, I am about to set out for the army. I entrust to you what I hold dearest in the whole world, my wife and son. Let there be no political divisions among you. I appeal to you to guard them for my sake."

After that short speech, the air was rent with the cries of *Vive l'Empereur*, and then the four of them descended from the platform to mingle with the guests, who were duly presented by ex-King Joseph. Desirée was always thrilled by shows of this sort and was enabled to have a good close-up of the big four. First she studied the man who had been her first real lover, now the Emperor. There was nothing in his present appearance to suggest the slim figure and long, fair hair and masculine loveliness that had played such havoc with her heart in the distant days of Marseilles. Instead, she saw a gross, unsympathetic face which rested or rather rose out of a pair of shoulders. The rotundity of the waist did not seem to be due to advancing age, but looked as if it required medical attention. She noticed the white breeches and silk stockings, and could say that on just two points the passing years had failed to damage the beauty of the Emperor: in his soft, delicate hands and his shapely, well-turned legs.

By his side was Joseph, who showed grey hairs and had developed an attractive smile and crossway glance which must have been most alluring to the ladies. And there was the Empress, with her graceful, girlish figure: her pretty but characterless face, and that abundance of thick, auburn hair which was the envy of every woman in Paris. And last, there was Julie, her own dear sister, now looking very thin and very sad. There was one other—a little one. A child with pink colouring, golden curls and a gay uniform, who looked with frightened, wistful eyes at the array of guests that were being presented to him. He looked more like a girl than a boy, but Desirée thought he was a lovely child.

From the moment of her first entry, Desirée had misgivings about this ball. She had avoided all her friends, keeping rigidly to herself, watching and listening to everything, saying nothing. This attitude had been adopted by her ever since her visit to her wounded husband, when she allowed her buoyancy and cheerfulness to come into play. And thus she moved from place to place in that crowded room. In one place two men were talking in low tones, "Lion of the forest, indeed! He is only a wounded lion now;" and the other promptly replied, "Wounded, maybe . . . but still dangerous. Especially with that cub."

She had seen enough to know that the Emperor's presence did not

produce the same thrill as on previous occasions. She had heard enough, too, and wanted to go home and write to Bernadotte about it. But before going, she could not resist one last peep into the ballroom.

And that was the last time that she saw them all together, the two men, who at different times had wanted to marry her; the strange, interloping foreign woman, proud and stupid, who had neither the desire or ability to understand people around her; the sickly sister, whom she adored with her whole being; the infant whose arrival on the earth had thrust a new problem in the face of Europe. Yes, indeed, she could remember when *he* talked about *himself* and his family, *himself* and his star, *himself* and his destiny, *himself* and his army, *himself* and his crown. And now all these things—family, star, destiny, crown—were all on the verge of the rubbish heap, and in their place stood instead a little boy who looked exactly like a little girl.

As she made her way down the stairs she was conscious that she was being followed. She looked round and saw Marmont hastening towards her. He reached her and then, with his most alluring smile, he looked into her eyes and said :—

“Pardon me, Your Highness, but you and I were once great friends.”

“That was many years ago.” Marmont laughed at the rebuff.

“You must see, I did not wish to be rude to you by inferring that your husband is a traitor.” He paused as though waiting for her to speak. But she remained silent, and her look was one of anger mixed with contempt.

“You must see that treason is not always a crime.” Again he paused and lowered his eyes to her, but still she did not answer. Then he bent forward and spoke to her in a stage whisper some very strange words, “*We are all traitors now.*”

Such was the ball that took place on the night of January the 23rd, 1814. It was just three months after the Battle of Leipzig and three months before the first abdication, which preceded the exile of Napoleon to Elba. It was specially memorable to all who attended it, for it was the last time that Napoleon ever appeared in public with his wife and child. It was practically the last time that he was ever with them, for on the morrow he set forth to the battle front, and on his return, the pair of them had gone to Austria.

As for Marmont, this famous artillery officer had risen to be one of the greatest fighters and strategists of the Empire. His reputation was at its height at the time of *Iena*, but was later tarnished by Wellington in Spain. He, however, returned to Paris and fought some brilliant rearguard actions after the defeat at Leipzig. At the time of the ball at the Tuileries he had been appointed to command all the artillery in the defence of Paris, in addition to his army command. His was a most important post.

But it did not last. A few days after the ball, he went into action, and then he himself turned traitor and went over to the enemy. It is obvious that he had made up his mind to take this course, long before the ball took place. Hence his very mysterious words to *Desirée* on this occasion. As a result of his treason, the word *Ragusa* has been adopted into the French language in the verb *raguser*, which means “to raguse, to be a traitor, to act as a quisling.”

CHAPTER XXIV

PARIS IN CHAOS

THE Emperor returned to the front for the purpose of fighting what was, from the military point of view, one of the most sparkling campaigns of his whole career. For a long time past the world had learned that he was the undoubted champion of aggressive tactics, and in these months it learned that he was also the supreme master of defensive strategy as well.

Meanwhile, King Panic was raging inside the Imperial Palace. The people were nervous and frightened at the sound of distant gunfire and were swarming round Joseph, pressing him to make peace—peace at any price. In such times a Frenchman invariably takes leave of his senses, and in this case Joseph acted like a pure Frenchman. He was in charge of the city, which meant that he sat in a room receiving reports, issuing orders at a great rate and cancelling them immediately afterwards. It was the same Joseph, as nervous and undecided as he had been in Spain, now forced into a mass of problems far graver than he had ever encountered before.

In another room was the Empress, overcome with terror, rushing up and down, picking up her son, kissing him feverishly, putting him down again and crying profusely all the time. By her side was Julie, pale and haggard, yet outwardly calm and composed, trying to speak words of encouragement and hope to this frightened lady.

"What have I done to deserve it? This man, this monster, has brought nothing but death, famine and disgrace to my country. He has humiliated my father by forcing me to leave my home and become his wife. Oh, tell me, what have I done to deserve it?"

At that moment Joseph came bustling into the room with a bunch of official papers in his hand. He made his way straight to the weeping Empress.

"All reports point the same way. Marmont has failed us and they are saying that even he has gone over to the enemy. Paris is in danger of capitulation. I must ask you, Madame, to leave the city and take the child with you."

"But where am I to go?"

"It is of no consequence. You can go where you please. Perhaps it is all temporary, and perhaps we, Bonapartes, may arise again in the future. But for the present, the safety of the King of Rome is all that matters. You must take him away at once. He must not fall into the hands of the enemy."

The Empress moaned and again burst into tears. After a while the little boy began to cry in sympathy.

"But, Joseph," said Julie, whose nerves were almost breaking, "are you sure you are doing the right thing? What will the Emperor say? Has he given you permission?"

"Never mind about that. You all heard what I said. At this moment the life of the King of Rome is more important even than that of the Emperor himself."

"Oh . . . oh . . . oh . . . but will the Emperor ever forgive me for running away?" It was clear that the unfortunate Empress was in a very difficult mood.

"Dear Joseph, are you quite sure that you are doing the right thing?" Julie's eyes were brimming with tears.

"Yes, Julie, I am quite sure. I am ready to take full responsibility," and again he turned to the Empress: "Madame, you heard what I said and, please, there is no time to lose." The Empress rose most unwillingly, and Joseph followed her to the door. "The King of Rome must be preserved, for if he goes, the name of Bonaparte will be lost for ever."

Joseph had never been so firm before in all his life. A few minutes later, the Empress and her little son were ready for the road. At the door Joseph bade farewell to the muffled lady. He kissed her hand more fervently than was his wont, and then knelt down and kissed the little boy. "Au revoir!" he said softly. "Au revoir to the Emperor Napoleon the Second."

Julie kissed the Empress on both cheeks and then, like Joseph, she knelt before the child, clasping him with all her strength. "May God preserve you, my little Aiglon, and bring you back some day to France."

And then, Joseph and Julie, deeply moved, stood at the window and watched the coach till it was out of sight. "And that, dear Julie, is the end of another chapter in our two lives. Probably the saddest that we shall ever know." Julie clasped her husband's arm to prevent herself from falling down. "Oh, Joseph, I wonder if the Emperor will ever see his son again."

Such is a brief description of the heart-rending drama that was being played at the Tuileries. There was similar dismay in many other houses in Paris. But on the other hand there was one house where things were absolutely calm and quiet on that awful day. It was the house in the Rue d'Anjou, where Desirée was all alone and waiting for her man to come home. But the quietness that she was enjoying was just the calmness that follows every storm, for little Desirée had been going through some terrible times.

In order to picture the chaotic state of Paris at this period one has only to follow the footsteps of Desirée and Julie. Theirs was a cat-and-mouse life, consisting mainly of packing up and moving out. Take the case of Desirée. The departure of Bernadotte for Sweden had raised her status considerably. She was living in a world of flattery and adulation when Joseph returned from Spain. But Joseph was in disgrace. He was under a cloud with both the Emperor and the people, and he was ordered to vacate the Luxemburg Palace. So he and Julie packed up and moved back to his house at Mortefontaine, where Bernadotte and Desirée had spent their honeymoon. But even there he was pestered to such an extent that he and Julie decided to pack up again and go and live with Desirée, at the house in the Rue d'Anjou which had become a kind of hotel for ex-queens and ex-princesses. In addition to Joseph and Julie, Desirée's guests included Pauline, who was all in a muddle with divorces and re-marriages, and Catherine of Westphalia, the wife of Jerome.

Joseph and Julie did not remain long in Desirée's house. He became Governor of Paris, and as his new job was mainly social, he proved a great success and quickly regained the confidence of the Emperor. For a short time everything was rosy. Then the news arrived that Bernadotte had landed in Pomerania with a Swedish army, with the intention of driving out the French. In a moment all the anger and scowls which Joseph and Julie had received were suddenly transferred against Desirée. Indeed, at one time the situation was so serious

that it looked as if she might be arrested. So Desirée packed up her trunks, closed the house in the Rue d'Anjou, and sought safety with Joseph and Julie at Mortefontaine. Hardly had she arrived there when it was learned that Bernadotte had defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Leipzig, followed by a spate of rumours that he was going to lead the Allied forces across Europe with the object of capturing Paris. For a time Paris was utterly distracted, and then a new force suddenly made itself heard. It was the unseen and unknown obstacle men who were the political followers of Bernadotte. They argued that Paris would be torn to shreds by the Russians and Prussians, but that their only chance was to keep on the right side of Bernadotte, who was at any rate a Frenchman. This argument gained ground at rapid speed, and the fickle crowd decided to try and win the friendship of Desirée, who was in a state of complete bewilderment. Finding herself popular again, Desirée packed up, left Mortefontaine and returned to her house in the Rue d'Anjou. It was from there that she attended the ball at the Tuileries, and it is hardly surprising that Julie was looking so tired and worn out on that spectacular evening.

While one section of the crowd was shouting for Bernadotte, another section was started in opposition, who shouted for the Bourbons. That did not affect Desirée, who was regarded as neutral to both parties. Letters from Sweden indicated that her husband intended to return to Paris as soon as possible. So Desirée watched and waited, listening to the distant gunfire, which was approaching ever nearer and nearer.

At the beginning of April the enemy was at the gates, and on the 11th, Napoleon signed his abdication, after which he went to Elba, accompanied by his mother and Pauline. As he left his capital, the rabble nearly got out of hand, and might easily have lynched him. As soon as it was known that he had gone, all the other Bonaparte princelings decided to follow his example, and there was a mad scramble for carriages and coaches. Within two or three days they had all left: nobody knew where they had gone, and nobody cared. When the Allies entered Paris, only three of the Bonaparte family remained: Joseph, Julie and Desirée. It was a very humiliating moment when Joseph handed over the keys of the city to the Allied leaders, and after doing so, he and Julie packed up again and fled to Switzerland. Only one of them now remained, and that was Desirée, who waited because she knew that her man was on the way.

The twelve days that followed the abdication seemed like twelve years to Desirée. Her parting with Julie had been terrible for them both. She did not care to show herself in the streets. The crowd knew her and liked her, and often cheered her, but she could not talk to them for she knew nothing, understood nothing, and could do nothing. Twelve days passed and then at last, at long, long last, a carriage arrived with a precious occupant. After four years in Sweden, Bernadotte had returned to his home and his wife.

The house was barricaded and guarded by the police, because Bernadotte had specially asked for complete privacy. Nothing is known for certain about his last visit to Paris, beyond that he stayed there for a fortnight. It would appear that he never left his house at all throughout that period, and therefore the story of these days is a matter of surmise. At the same time the purport and circumstances of his visit are as clear as crystal.

Here is Desirée's opinion: "The posts formerly under the imperial régime are now under Bourbon novices, who are making an unholy

mess of everything. Hunger and discontent are to be seen in all sides. The Bourbons came back to power, not because the people wanted them, but because there was no other alternative. The name of Bernadotte was frequently heard. Some of the people said they wanted their Obstacle Man, but they only received mockery and derision. The Bonapartes said he was a traitor; the Bourbons said he was a Swede. Anyhow, nothing could be done in his absence from France."

But now that he was back the big question was: Should Bernadotte seize the Crown of France?

Bernadotte's reply might have been: "On the face of it nothing can be easier, and I have only to show myself in the streets, harangue the mob, promise them peace and liberty, and then take the reins. I am not on bad terms with the Bourbons, who count for little, or the Bonapartes, who count for nothing. I am popular with the army, though the marshals may take a lot of weeding out. That will not be difficult, for many of them have already lost their lives, while others, like Murat and Marmont, have betrayed their chief. As for the politicians, or lawyers, they can always be appeased with the promise of good posts with no work and plenty of pay."

There was a second reaction. This was something that Bernadotte knew and that Paris had not learned. Paris could only see the main enemy in her streets, which was composed of Russian, Austrian and Prussian. Bernadotte had learned that in the question of international affairs, this combination counted for nothing at all. The real power was in London, and the island empire was grimly determined to play a leading part in the remodelling of Europe. He had met a number of Englishmen in Sweden whom he liked and who liked him, but he knew that such men were not representative of their country as a whole. Public opinion in England was against him for two reasons: firstly he was still considered as a "puppet-king of Bonaparte," and secondly, because he had protested at the recent peace, when it was suggested that French territory east of the Rhine should be given to Prussia. It was claimed that the Rhine was a German river and not a German boundary, and it must be admitted, rather regretfully, that England scorned Bernadotte and upheld the Prussian view. To sum up, it was clear that England had a poor opinion of Bernadotte and that Prussia detested him.

Such were the problems that faced Bernadotte and Desirée in April, 1812. To stage or not to stage a coup! The chances were all in Bernadotte's favour, for the Bourbons were both stupid and corrupt. But in this case England was the Obstacle Man. England preferred Bourbon to Bernadotte, and the whole world was listening to what England said. How could he possibly revive France with a hostile England and a hostile Prussia on either side of him? By this time the reader will have guessed the course which he chose to adopt. He did, again exactly what he had done after Brumaire, after Lubeck and after Leipzig: he ran away.

After a very quiet fortnight in Paris he drove away, and this time Oscar went with him. He had arranged that Desirée should keep him posted on every event and every detail, no matter how trivial, that might occur. He left Paris as unostentatiously as when he arrived. He stopped the coach at the border on his way back to Stockholm, and was seen to clasp his son to his breast as he muttered the words:—

"Farewell, beloved France. . . . Farewell for ever."

True to her word, Desirée maintained a lively and vigorous correspondence, telling him everything that was taking place. She told him of the new regime in Paris, which had none of the glamour or colour of the Empire, but was at the same time very much cheaper. She told him that the Empress had discovered a gentleman friend in Austria and was not likely to return to France, and that the little Aiglon was being sadly neglected, being treated like a street foundling. But the deepest concern in all letters was expressed in regard to Julie, whose poor state of health was giving grave anxiety both to Joseph and herself.

She told him how in the early days of 1815 Napoleon succeeded in escaping from Elba. The news dropped on the world like a thunderbolt and affected every household in Europe. Bernadotte was flabbergasted and could not help comparing it with the arrival of Bonaparte in France after the campaign in Egypt, and said, "There will be another Brumaire on a larger and greater scale, and after that—who knows what may happen?"

She told him of the arrival of the Emperor in Paris with Ney by his side; of the wild enthusiasm of the people and of the conscription of another mighty army; of every detail of the hundred days. Bernadotte studied every word of her letters. Then came the three battles of Ligny, Quatre Bras and Waterloo, and it was clear that at last the Emperor had met his master in strategy and tactics. Oh, the emotion with which he devoured the details of Waterloo! The solid defence of the infantry squares, followed by that crashing order to charge at the very moment when Ney was temporarily exhausted—that was a masterpiece of timing. He wanted to meet Wellington, just for the sake of looking at him. What a leader! And what an army!

She told him of the Emperor's second flight to Paris, of his short stay in the city, during which he saw nobody except his mother and Hortense: of the anger of the mob who would have liked to tear him to pieces: of his flight to the Channel, where he was joined by Joseph. She told him how her sympathy for these two brothers was leading her back into a blind admiration for them, how they were reminding her of the times when she first knew them in Marseilles.

A farmhouse at Rochefort, on the English Channel. In the centre of the large room stood a table on which lay a letter, written in scrawly, illegible handwriting. A wooden chair faced the fireplace where logs were sparking and burning. The window looked on to the bay beneath where a beautiful ship was lying at anchor; she was a fighting ship and bore the name of H.M.S. *Bellerophon*.

On this chair was sitting a middle-aged man, whose chin hung low on his breast, whose plump legs were stretched in front of him, and whose graceful hands were concealed in the pockets of his soiled white breeches. He was in uniform, wearing the familiar Napoleonic hat, which covered his steel-grey, close-cropped hair. His sunken eyes gazed on the burning logs with an expression that might have meant anything from disappointment to despair. Such was Napoleon Bonaparte in 1815.

The door opened and Joseph entered. He was dressed, not like the gilded popinjay of Naples or Spain, but in a plain, civilian travelling suit. Slowly he approached his brother, and then laid his hand gently on his shoulder. There was no response of any sort. After a while, Joseph drew up a kitchen chair and sat down by his side.

"Brother, speak to me. Are you thinking of the future?"

"Not of my own future, for I have none. I was thinking of my son."

"He, at any rate, is safe."

"Where is Julie?"

"She is here. She is with me."

"And Desirée?"

"Still in Paris."

"In Paris. Looking for a star. She will never find it. It has faded now."

The brothers were talking rather more rapidly than before, but all the time the eyes of Napoleon never once left the burning logs in the kitchen fireplace. After the mention of the star, there was a sort of cold, uncanny silence, after which Joseph resumed in a voice that tried hard to sound cheerful.

"I have made arrangements to take Julie and the children to America. You must come with us, brother."

"No. Not to America."

He made his first movement by inclining his head towards the open letter lying on the table behind him. Joseph went over to the table, picked up the letter and started to read it. He found that it was addressed to the Prince Regent of England.

"Your Royal Highness.

A victim to the factions which distract my country and to the enmity of the greatest powers in Europe, I have ended my political career, and I come, like Themistocles, to throw myself on the hospitality of the British people. I put myself under the protection of their laws, which protection I claim from Your Royal Highness as the most powerful, the most constant, and the most generous of my enemies.

NAPOLÉON."

Joseph read the letter and gasped with astonishment.

"England! Oh, my brother. Don't tell me that you are going to England."

"Yes. I am going to England."

"But when?"

"To-day. This very day. In a few minutes I shall say farewell to France. Perhaps for ever."

"But, brother, why to the English?"

"Because I am a fighting man and so are they. I will place my body at their disposal. They are a chivalrous race, and I would trust them before any other. There is an English battleship in the harbour outside. I mean to take that letter on board and give it to the Captain."

"Brother, I will go with you."

"No, dear Joseph, you will not. If their sailors see the two of us, they will be suspicious. If I go alone and unarmed, they are more likely to trust me."

He rose from his seat and walked towards the door. As he did so, he paused, and the two brothers stood face to face. Twenty-one years had passed since the same two men had regarded one another in a garret in Marseilles. In that period they had each slept with the same mistress, whose name was Power, and whose caresses had turned one of them into a tyrant and the other into an ass. It was only a momentary glance after which Napoleon took up the letter and folded it. As he did so, a strange thing happened. Joseph suddenly lost complete

control of himself. He broke down, sobbing and crying like a little child.

"Brother, you must not do it. . . . Think of France. . . . Think of your son. . . . Think of me, Brother, don't go to them. . . . Don't leave me." The Emperor paused and cast a momentary look at the pitiful object, and then turned away and moved slowly on. "Brother, listen to me. . . . Wait for a moment. . . . Wait, for my sake. . . . I have something to suggest. . . . It is very important. . . . You must listen to me."

Napoleon paused again and seemed to be affected by the warmth of the last outburst. "So you have a suggestion, Joseph. What is it?"

Joseph made a great effort to pull himself together. But the result was just a confused stammer, punctuated with sobs and groans.

"Brother, the English have never seen you . . . and they have . . . never seen me . . . and we are both supposed to be . . . like one another. . . . My life . . . is of no value . . . it never was . . . I am just a fool . . . but you . . . and your life . . . mean so much to us all. . . . Why, then . . . why should not we . . . change clothes? Brother, for the sake of us all. For the sake of posterity . . . for the sake of France . . . take my Julie and my babies . . . and let the English hang me . . . or do whatever they please. . . ."

A mystical smile hovered over the face of the Emperor as he listened to this amazing suggestion. When he replied his voice was so soft that it was hardly audible. It was not the shrill, lashing voice of Napoleon the Emperor, but the low husky voice of Napoleon the man.

"Surely the world can show nothing so beautiful or so noble as the love of a brother! Thank you, dear Joseph, my bungling brother and my best friend. But it cannot be. The English are not fools and I—I must follow the call of my Destiny."

He passed on, but at the door he turned back and saw that Joseph was in a state of collapse. He returned to him, embraced him, kissed him on both cheeks and then stepped out, solitary and alone, to face his Destiny.

His Destiny! What was it? This man was soon to learn what we all know. His Destiny was Plymouth and Saint Helena.

* * * *

CHAPTER XXV

"I AM A QUEEN"

It is difficult to picture the changed atmosphere of Paris after Waterloo. The departure of the Bonapartes: the arrival of the Allied armies: the icy reserve of the British soldiers: the rapacious cruelty of the Prussians: the pitiful incompetency of the Bourbons. Not a man gave a thought to the honour or betterment of the nation, for the Government had but one thought, one great concern which was to abolish and exterminate

every souvenir or memento of the Bonaparte family and at the same time keep them from crossing the frontiers.

The Bonapartes had all disappeared either to Italy, Switzerland, or America. Only one of them was allowed to remain and that was Desirée, the Crown Princess of Sweden. She watched that terrible year of 1815 come to a close, to be followed by 1816 and 1817, which were almost as bad. By this time she was nearly forty years old, and a new generation was springing up. Her brother, Etienne, was the father of seven children, and there were also numerous half-brothers and sisters, nearly all with growing progeny. The result was that the house in the Rue d'Anjou, once the "hotel" of refugee princesses, changed its appearance and became the "hotel" for noisy and mischievous nephews and nieces.

One evening in February, 1818, two women were sitting in the darkened *salon*. One of them was Desirée, who was doing her best with a difficult piece at the piano. Many women have played the piano better than Desirée, few worse. The other occupant was a daughter of Etienne, who was also a Countess of the Empire.

They were interrupted by a footman, who delivered a letter to Desirée. She stopped playing and opened it. She read that the King of Sweden was dead, and that the names of the new King and Queen of Sweden would be King Charles the Tenth and Queen Desideria. She laid the letter on her lap, turned to her niece and said softly:—"I am a Queen."

A silence followed the listless announcement of these dramatic words. It was broken by the niece with one of those silly questions that women sometimes ask.

"Will you continue playing the piano when you go to Sweden?"

"No, no, no," came the reply with some vehemence. "Do you think that I want to be told that I play the piano . . . *like a queen*?"

When the news reached London, the Press was most interested. It was pointed out that the Empire that Bonaparte had created was now dissolved; that his puppet kings were all in exile with the sole exception of Sweden; and that it was quite useless for the new King to try to disguise the fact that he had once been a foremost figure in the army of Bonaparte.

Three more years have passed, and it is the 5th of May, 1821. The scene is Longwood, Saint Helena.

For some months past the mighty exile has been suffering from pain caused by an internal complaint. There is general apprehension, for his illness has now taken a serious turn. Outside, the wind is howling and the dark clouds are heralding that a powerful island storm is about to take place.

And now it is evening, and the storm has broken. Under its violence many trees are uprooted, houses shaken to their foundations, roads are washed away. In the humble camp bed the great Emperor is lying in the throes of death. He has long since ceased to grumble and complain at his treatment, but even in these hours there is no rest for him. He lies there, babbling and raving in a wild delirium. Perhaps he is thinking of his army, perhaps he is thinking of his wife. But owing to the din of the tempest and the incoherence of his diction, it is difficult to recognise the words as they come. Still, it was thought that he said "tete d'armee," while the mention of Josephine was quite distinct.

The thunder roared louder than any cannon, fashioned by the

hand of man. The lightning flashed with such brightness that it seemed to cleave the skies and offer a view of eternity. And when the storm was at the pitch of its intensity the mighty spirit of Napoleon passed to the life beyond.

It was the same day, the 5th of May, 1821. The scene was the Royal Palace of Stockholm.

It had been noticed that the King, usually so active and good-humoured, was nervous and high-strung. He retired to bed early, but was haunted by an awful presentiment of death, and lay, restless and awake, right through the night. At first he thought that, somewhere in Paris, his Queen must be in danger.

Later, he learned that the time of his presentiment was also the time of the death of his former chief. The word telepathy was unknown in those days, and this must have been one of the first real examples of it. He always admitted that his presentiment on that night had made him quite ill, and that he was dazed when he learned, some weeks later, that the death of Napoleon had taken place at that very time.

Naturally, the public of Sweden and of countless other countries was anxious to learn what Bernadotte had to say about the illustrious Emperor to whose elevation and downfall he had so largely contributed. After a few days he gave them the statement they wanted. But it was not a gasconade, it was more like a sermon. It was long and it was impartial, reflecting the religious spirit that was observed in all countries after the removal of the devastating regime. Here is an extract :—

He was greater than us all. He was not conquered by men or mortal beings. He was punished by God because he relied on his own intelligence alone, until that prodigious instrument was strained to breaking point. Everything breaks in the end. The only things that can offer resistance are goodness of soul and purity of heart.

Two more years passed and still Desirée remained in Paris. By that time she was forty-two and had become somewhat matronly in character and appearance. The Bourbons treated her with the greatest respect, and were proud to have the Queen of Sweden as a resident in their capital. By this time she had a large number of grown-up nephews and nieces for whom she supplied innumerable presents, tips and dowries. Her purse was similarly open to the distant Bonapartes, even to those whom she had most disliked in their prosperous times. She was a model of generosity, especially towards those who were in poverty and exile.

She continued to write copious letters to her husband, but it must not be thought that these letters were entirely devoted to gossip. In some respects the part that she played towards her husband was similar to that played by Joseph towards Napoleon during the Egyptian campaign. The presence of the Bourbons found favour with the foreign powers, but their popularity in France was questionable. "At the same time French relations with Sweden were very cordial and indeed, at one time there were actually negotiations between the King of France and Bernadotte as to which should have the French Crown. But the matter ended, and did not rise again. Both countries agreed that "no Government could be more detestable to France or more unpopular with her neighbours than that of the Bonaparte." There was nothing very original in this view. Great Britain had held it for twenty years,

and Bernadotte for about half that period ; after Waterloo everybody else held it. The only country that regretted the downfall of the Bonapartes was the United States of America, which was infuriated at the praise and distinction handed to Britain at the end of the twenty year struggle.

In spite of their close collaboration, the Kings of France and Sweden refused to sign any official pact. They, however, concluded a sort of gentleman's agreement that Bernadotte should be unofficially represented in Paris in the person of his wife, the Queen of Sweden. In this way Desirée, playing the part of Queen and Ambassador, was most useful in helping both countries along.

She had another reason for staying in Paris, which was very personal. Her deepest concern was centred in the state of her sister's health. That dear lady, the amiable Julie, was far too delicate to bear the hardships and sorrows that were being visited on the Bonapartes. To her the agony of living in America was far, far greater than the agony of Saint Helena to Napoleon. A lady of her tastes and character was wholly unfitted for the snobs and touts who showered her with honeyed phrases of sympathy and admiration, and then boasted raucously that they had been "talking to a queen." Other Americans, whose ideas of royal personages are based on the Song of Sixpence, were frankly disappointed in a queen who was fond of domestic life and seemed to prefer her kitchen to her drawing room. After twenty years in Paris during its most glamorous period, this was a terrible come down, which proved too much for Julie. She could not eat, she could not sleep, and life became intolerable. Desirée, in Paris, was well aware of the sufferings of her sister.

With Joseph it was not so bad. Having rid himself of the mistress whose name was Power, he returned to his natural self, and soon became tremendously popular. He uttered fulsome phrases of flattery which delighted his listeners, and never let slip an opportunity of repeating both in the written and spoken word, how greatly he admired the people of America and their love of Liberty. He was known as the Count de Surveilleur, and he has left behind one delightful story which has been vigorously denied, but which might easily be true. The people of Mexico were caught by a passing enthusiasm of royalty, and suggested that Joseph might come along and be their king. Joseph replied tersely that he had already ruled over two countries, and he was damned if he would ever rule over a third.

Desirée frequently pleaded with the Bourbons to grant her a favour by allowing Julie to return. But on this point they were adamant, arguing that if they did so, all the other Bonapartes would also want to return. All the persuasion that she could muster was of no avail.

Thus, on the face of it all, there seemed to be really very little necessity for Desirée to remain in Paris. Every letter from Sweden contained a prayer that she should join her husband and son in Stockholm. It was clear that he was happy in his new country, he was fond of the people, and, further, little Oscar was becoming a young man. Desirée promised to come, but she kept postponing the day.

At the beginning of 1823 the day came for which she had been waiting for no less than eight years. Joseph and Julie left America and returned to Europe for the purpose of seeing their eldest daughter married to a son of Louis and Hortense. During these days the Bourbons were particularly watchful and alert in case any of the party should

try to enter France. After the wedding was over, Julie, under the guise of a feigned name, came to Brussels, and there the two sisters met again.

It was a very private meeting, and neither of them ever mentioned it in after life. But we can easily imagine these two middle-aged ladies, so like in character and so different in appearance, walking together hand in hand, just as they had in Marseilles, forty-three years before. But now there was nobody, not even a Sergeant of Marines, who could possibly bring himself to utter "Just like a pair of queens."

We know nothing of their meeting, but we can easily make a shrewd guess what they talked about by merely comparing their two stations. One of them had held the position of Second Lady in Europe for a number of years. Her kindness and charity were proverbial. She had not, neither had she ever had an enemy in the world. She had possessed great riches, and great power, but now faced a future life of darkness and misery, and possibly the gruesome nightmare of a return to America. The other girl had held a position of honour without special distinction. She had also possessed riches and power, and she was faced with a new country, a people that longed to meet her, an upright husband that adored her, and a son who worshipped her. Is it not very strange that Destiny should have juggled thus with the lives of these girls?

Thus the two sisters met and when they parted they knew that they would never see one another again. From that time further excuses for remaining in Paris seemed to wear thin, and so Desirée commenced to give serious thought to the ever-increasing appeals from her husband to come and join him in Sweden. And then she started to pack in earnest.

The house in the Rue d'Anjou was filled with souvenirs of the Empire such as trinkets, jewellery, dresses and millions of letters. Desirée proceeded to give away to members of her family most of her fascinating mementoes of the Emperor's court, and then she dealt with the letters, which she sorted out with great precision. Having done so she proceeded to commit what in the eyes of posterity can only be described as an unpardonable crime. Perhaps it will be remembered that Julie had an obnoxious habit of destroying all the portraits and miniatures of herself as soon as they had been painted. It must have been a Clary obsession, for Desirée did exactly the same thing with the letters, thereby depriving posterity of invaluable relics and information. She did not do it out of spite, for there was no such thing as malice in either of the Clary girls. She only did it because she feared that there were details in those letters that might tarnish the reputations of her friends, her contemporaries, her relations, and possibly herself as well. She destroyed them all, but there was just one strange looking thing that might have been an old wallet, which she laid aside and kept for herself. It was soiled, crumpled and dirty, but she clasped it fondly, muttering, "I am going to take this with me to Sweden."

It was a sad moment for all the nephews, nieces and cousins when they saw their Lady Bountiful, or perhaps Auntie Bountiful, with all her cases packed up and herself ready for her long and tiring journey. She embraced them all, kissed them, blessed them, and then readjusted her thick veil and drove away. Her last injunctions were that they should keep her house warm for her, in case she should return.

Her grief at leaving Paris was just as great as it had been when, as a child in the Revolution, she had left Marseilles. She did not know that she was leaving France for ever. She did not realise that she was

doing just what Napoleon had done after embracing Joseph at Rochefort, and that she also was following the call of her Destiny. In her case it was to lead her to peace, comfort and happiness.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BIRTH OF A DYNASTY

"Your pulse seems to be all right. In fact, on the whole, Your Majesty's health appears to be quite sound."

The black-coated, side-whiskered doctor replaced the huge turnip watch in his pocket and regarded his royal patient.

"I have already told you that there is nothing the matter with me at all. I find that I tire easily and want to get right away from people and be alone. I am not physically ill."

The King of Sweden was in an irritable mood, for he did not like doctors. In his view their only use was for amputating shattered and useless limbs that had been lacerated in the storm of battle. He himself had never had a day's illness, and it was only after a great deal of persuasion that he had been induced to allow one of them to attend him in his Palace.

"Your Majesty, if I may say so, is working too hard. Six in the morning till eight in the evening. Those are very long hours for a man over sixty years old. . . . And then there are the evening visitors as well."

"What do you mean? I have no evening visitors." The King was in a contradictory mood, and the doctor noticed the displeasure in his voice and manner. Still, he had a duty to perform and he was not afraid of it.

"Pardon me, Your Majesty, but there is a woman caller at this moment who is waiting to see you. I saw her when I arrived."

"Did you? Well, I know nothing about her."

"She told me that she intended to see you, and in my opinion you are far too tired to see her. In fact I think you are right in going to bed early. When the warm weather comes you must go to the country and have a good rest. I am convinced, Your Majesty, that you are overworking yourself."

"Thank you, doctor. You may ring that bell."

The King showed signs of irritation and was evidently anxious to get rid of his visitor, before the latter had a chance of writing up some prescription. The doctor took the hint, rose from his chair, and pulled a long tassel that hung from the ceiling down the full length of the wall. It was one of the old-fashioned bell cords, and immediately afterwards a butler in livery appeared, holding in his hand a slender packet, which he placed on the table at the side of the King. He then showed out the doctor, and withdrew after making a bow to his Sovereign.

As soon as he was gone, the King lay back in his chair and closed his eyes. He was in his sixtieth year, his mind and body were at the height of health and vigour, and yet he himself was feeling like a worn and tired man. He had nothing to complain about, for he loved his people in just the same way that they loved him. But there was something missing. There was a gap somewhere in his life.

His eye hovered round the richly furnished room. The stately

pictures of ancient and modern Swedish kings, the books on military strategy and tactics, which he often read to himself, as well as those on trade and economics which he forced himself to study. He looked on the oriental carpet and the sumptuous furniture, until his eye fell on the table by his side, and the little packet that lay on it. A glow of interest started in his eyes and he moved his chair so as to be close to the lamp.

While he did so, the door behind opened softly and a lady entered. She advanced silently and stealthily towards the little table. She was dressed completely in black, and wore an old-fashioned poke-bonnet, over which hung a heavy, black veil completely obscuring her features.

The King was fumbling with the packet. At last he succeeded in opening it, thereby revealing a black and white card, very soiled and bearing some scrawly hand-writing. As he looked on this crinkled, dirty souvenir of a past generation, his whole demeanour changed, his eyes flashed with their old time lustre. He turned the packet over and muttered to himself :—

“Why . . . why, it’s my old pay-book. Sergeant Bernadotte, Royal-la-Marine, sous-officier. . . . So this is me . . . as I once was . . . as I am still.” He felt a movement somewhere and he started back. As he did so, he observed the veiled lady and stared at her in wonder. She, in reply, slowly raised her veil, revealing the face and of Desirée, lovelier and more impish than ever before. Her lips features broadened in to a smile, the roguish smile of the little bourgeoisie of Marseilles.

“Desirée, you stole this from me. You stole a pay-book and thereby got a poor soldier into trouble. How could you do such a thing? What do you mean by it?”

“It means, Sir, that my regiment arrived to-day in Stockholm, and I have come to ask if I may have a billet in your house.”

“But are you . . . are you an officer? Who are you?”

“You will find my name in the pay book. Bernadotte. Eugénie Desirée Bernadotte.”

The comedy was over and they both laughed. In a twinkling she was in his arms and they were embracing one another.

“I have left Paris, probably for ever. Paris without the Emperor is not Paris at all.”

“It will never be the same, never. Darling, for over ten years I have waited for this day. I have been cut off from the French people and I have become a very lonely man. I work hard all the time, and even now I cannot prevent my thoughts from going back to the days when *he* ruled the world.”

“It is the same with me. I also am a lonely woman. That is why I have come back to you.”

“Oh, my dearest, how I have longed for this day! You will never know how much I have missed you, and now that I have got you I shall never let you leave me. Come with me. I want to show you something.”

He clasped her by the waist and led her to a picture with folding panels, like a triptych. He then opened the doors and revealed a full length portrait of Napoleon. It was a striking likeness, and as Desirée gazed on it, her eyes filled with tears.

“He was ambitious and so was I. My ambition was to be King of France, but he overtook me and became Emperor. I had to serve him instead of him serving me. Even then I would gladly have been

his chief adviser, like Sulla in ancient Rome, but he spurned me. He sent me out of my country, and to-day in the eyes of France I am a traitor, in the eyes of Europe I am but a mushroom-king. Nevertheless he was the greatest captain of us all. Only Caesar and Alexander can compare with him. More than that, he has written a page in history whose glamour will inspire every soldier and every statesman for all times to come. Yes, indeed, I am proud to have served under him. He was my chief."

"And he was my first love," and Desirée sobbed in her husband's arms.

"I know that." The king smiled down on her. "But don't forget that I was your second, and let me assure Your Majesty that there will never, never be a third."

He bent down and kissed her on the lips. And in that way the Obstacle Man of the first empire was reunited to the little bourgeoisie of Marseilles.

Another ordeal now faced Desirée, which somewhat perplexed her. How was she going to get on with her son? What would he think of her?

When they did meet, it was Desirée that got the pleasant surprise. She saw a young man in his early twenties with dark eyes and dark hair, a splendid figure and an easy, natural manner which goes with all Nordic people. Desirée was by no means insensitive to masculine attractions, and was positively embarrassed by his handsome face and charming manners. He, for his part, was overcome by a similar feeling, for he lavished his whole attention on his mother and was jealous if anyone else wanted to talk to her. An impression of their reunion has been given by Desirée in a letter that she wrote to Madame Récamier: "I am so very sad that you were unable to be with us, for I particularly want you to meet my son, who is his father again at twenty-three. He has nothing of me about him, which is well, for it would be of no value to him."

Oh, Desirée! How could you write such a thing!

Oscar was going to be married and his bride was a daughter of Eugène Beauharnais, whose marriage to a Bavarian Princess had been arranged by Napoleon in the match-making period between the battles of Austerlitz and Iena. Her mother was the lady whose picture appeared on the Munich mug which the Emperor had described as "being her likeness, but of course she is better looking than that."

The appearance of this sixteen-year-old girl must have provided a host of memories in the breast of the Swedish King. He might have recalled that the grandfather of this child was the son of Vicomte Beauharnais the first general under whom he, as a common soldier, had ever performed active service; that this man's widow, on his first meeting with her, had prevented a serious fracas between himself and Napoleon when he had talked of "the domestic enemies of France"; that she had attended that dreadful dinner party at the Palace which preceded the dismissal of them both from imperial Paris; and that the girl's father, Eugène, had been the first nominee of Napoleon to fill the position of Crown Prince of Sweden. . . . Indeed, if Napoleon's wishes had been fulfilled, Eugène would be occupying his own place. But in this case, Destiny had thwarted Napoleon.

Desirée's memories were similar. She remembered the woman who

had broken her first romance, thereby committing an unpardonable crime ; she remembered how she had spitefully called her "the old woman," and how this nickname was frequently used by Pauline and many others ; she remembered Hortense, whose incessant grumbling had irritated her. With such memories she found it difficult to be enthusiastic about her new daughter-in-law. The girl seemed to lack the qualities of a wife and mother, being more fond of her dolls than anything else.

On the other hand, Prince Oscar was deeply in love with his child wife. Within a year of the marriage a little stranger arrived, a thin and rather sickly child, but it was a boy. Bernadotte and Desirée both appeared at the window of the Palace, and the King held up the infant while the crowd roared and cheered till their throats were sore.

The advent of Desirée brought tremendous happiness to the royal household, and in certain respects altered her own outlook. In Paris she had been Auntie Bountiful, but she was not allowed to continue in that part ; she was far too young to be "auntie," but nobody could prevent her from being bountiful, for that was one of the chief characteristics of her nature. It will be remembered that in the distant past she had delivered a stern rebuff to her husband for treating her as a child, and he had accepted the rebuke. At the same time his attitude towards her did not alter in the least. When she came to Sweden, she found herself being treated in exactly the same way, but this time there was no rebuke against the master of the house. At the age of forty-two she found it far more agreeable to be treated as a child than as an auntie.

There was, however, an occasion when that curious, resolute will of the Clary breed showed itself. She wanted a coronation ! Her husband had already performed the religious ceremony, and there was no earthly need for any repetition. She begged, entreated, implored for a coronation, but was told it was absurd. Finally, she insisted on a coronation and, what is more, she won the day. Her coronation took place in 1829, after she had been Queen for ten years. Further, she had a nice long train, held up by train-bearers who did *not* drop it at any part of the ceremony.

At about the same time there appeared on the market a large number of books dealing with the life and career of Napoleon, which the public devoured with great relish. Among them was a book by Houssaye which contained the following paragraph :—

Desirée Clary was born for earthly honours, and indeed they rest lightly on her head. She was betrothed first to Joseph Bonaparte, then to Napoleon, then to Duphot. She refused Junot, but would have been glad to marry Marmont. Finally, she married Bernadotte. If she had married Joseph, she would have been Queen of Naples and Queen of Spain ; if Napoleon, Empress of France ; if Junot, Marechale and Duchess d'Abrantes ; if Marmont, Marechale and Duchesse de Ragusa. As it was, she married Bernadotte, who placed the Crown of Sweden on the head of the little bourgeoisie of Marseilles.

The above statement, coupled with the quotation of Madame Junot referring to her early married life, had the effect of inducing editors and pressmen to believe that Desirée possessed what is known in journalism as a "story." And so, from all sides she was approached for information about the early days when Napoleon was said to have been courting

her. They thought that she would be a super-glamorous lady, but found that she was just the opposite. They found that she was perfectly willing to recount the story related in our first chapter, ending up with the words "And that was how I first met my man ;" and similarly she would tell in detail the story related in the second chapter, ending up with the words "And that was how a Clary met a Bonaparte."

But that was all : beyond that she refused to say a word. She claimed that she could remember nothing about her engagement to Napoleon and, when further pressed, denied that such a thing had ever taken place. Whether the story-makers believed it or not is of no consequence. Certainly they made no mention of it, and for a time it seemed as if her secret would never be divulged. But that was not to be. A book appeared which made a tremendous sensation. It was Montholon's *Memories of Saint Helena*, and contained so many unlovely references to Sir Hudson Lowe that it was banned in England. It recorded phrases and conversation of the great exile, and it was said that the name of Desirée appeared in its pages. She managed to procure a copy, and found, in cold and naked print, the words : *Desirée Clary était la première inclination de Napoleon*. The people were interested, for it clearly proved that in his banishment, Napoleon could easily remember many things that Desirée was teaching herself to forget.

Between the years 1825 and 1840 the hunger of the British people for Napoleonic literature appeared to be insatiable. With the increase of knowledge, they dropped all their rancour and began to regard the deceased Emperor as a very great man. They were further enabled to appreciate the magnitude of the achievement of those who had eventually brought him to earth, and they set themselves to lionise the Duke of Wellington, flatter his glory, and hang on his words. "Bonaparte's marshals," he said, "were a damned poor lot. On the whole, Soult was the best of them."

And so it was decided that Marshal Soult should represent France at the Coronation of Queen Victoria in 1838. What happened on that day caused universal comment all over Europe. The people of London gave a warmer reception to the French Marshal than to any other figure in that distinguished gathering. In modern parlance, Marshal Soult literally "stole the picture." Over in Stockholm, Bernadotte read the accounts of that day with mixed feelings. As a general he had always considered Soult as inferior to himself. He could not see why the people of London should go mad about this man. The fact that Bernadotte showed such envy and jealousy clearly proves that he bitterly regretted his own inability to win the trust and confidence of the British people.

Then came a day when it was decided that the mortal remains of the great Emperor should be brought over from the lonely island for interment on the banks of the Seine. The news of this decision cast the royal palace into chaos and confusion. This time it was Desirée that played Ophelia. The woman who had taken pains to deny her romance with this man, suddenly became quite distracted. To her it seemed that the great Emperor was returning to his capital, and that it was essential that she should be there to pay him homage. She refused to listen to reason, but insisted on packing up her boxes in preparation for her own departure. They were placed in the hall, and for three days Desirée sat with them, endeavouring to make up her mind as to whether she would go or not. Eventually, it was too

late for her to go at all, and her boxes were taken and unpacked, after which life became normal again.

The King and Queen had given a private dinner party to which many guests had been invited. When the meal was over the guests repaired to the drawing-room, and during a lull in the conversation the King jumped to his feet and let off a gasconade. He talked about his sword and his principles and a great deal about honour and justice and high principles. His oratory was magnificent, his language inspiring and his technique superb. When he concluded his audience had been hypnotised into dead silence. While still under the influence of his voice and manner, they heard a soft, feminine voice :—

"He wouldn't hurt a cat !"

All looked towards the direction of the sound and saw the roguish, laughing eyes of Desirée, peering over her fan. The King flashed round on her and might have said something, but his words were drowned by the peals of laughter that echoed all round the room. He did the only thing that it was possible for him to do. He resumed his chair and himself joined in the laughing chorus.

During the eighteen-thirties an English girl dined at the Palace, and here is an extract from a letter she wrote :—

I had the good fortune to dine last Thursday at the Palace, where I met the King of Sweden as well as the Queen. He is the handsomest man that I have ever seen, and talked French to me when I was presented to him. Of course you know that he was once a general of Bonaparte, and people here say that he was the only man that Bonaparte was afraid of. He talks mostly in French and only a little in Swedish, but he talks most of the time, and his manners are so good that it is a pleasure to listen to him. The Queen is just the opposite. She is very small and very fat, and has no conversation at all. Once or twice at dinner she said something, and the King instantly stopped all the conversation to listen and encourage her. I expect she was pretty once, but really I cannot see how a man like that could possibly have married her.

Desirée lived to see her son, Oscar, come to the throne of his father, and uphold his love of progress in a comparatively short but useful reign. She also lived to see the accession of her grandson, Oscar II, who was the tiny mite that Bernadotte had held before the cheering crowd. The features of Oscar II are known to all philatelists, for he was the first King of Sweden whose face ever appeared on a postage stamp. He was also the first King of Sweden to visit England and meet Queen Victoria. She apparently liked him, and wrote that he was "Delightfully French."

Desirée's life in the Swedish capital was very happy : as Queen, as Queen-Mother, and Queen-Grandmother. With the exception of Soult she outlived all the characters mentioned in this narrative. She lived to see a world that was not interested in revolutions or wars—a very different world from her own youth and early womanhood. She lived to see the coming of the industrial revolution and social reform in the advancement of which Sweden has always been regarded as the most advanced country in the world.

Desirée died in 1860 at the age of seventy-nine. Forty-two years of her life had been spent in France, thirty-seven in Sweden. It is quite unnecessary to add that she was universally loved and revered by

all the people of her adopted country. She was the least affected and the least obtrusive of all the women of the French Empire. And yet among them all she was unique. She had succeeded in doing what they had all wanted to do and what they had all failed to do.

In other words, she had created a dynasty.

By the time that Desirée arrived in Sweden, all the dramatic and spectacular incidents of Bernadotte's life had already taken place. His throne was secure and the feelings of admiration that his people had displayed at the time he was Crown Prince had already changed into a sentimental attachment, far greater and far deeper than anything they had ever known before.

And now the time has come to take a last look at Bernadotte in the midst of the people who had, of their own free will, chosen him before all others to be their King and Sovereign. The man who had been described as "an old Jacobin with his head in the wrong place," or else as "an old corporal who grumbled when a man was taken from his file," or as "a man who had the nose of an eagle and the mind of a thrush." How would such a man fill the role of Royal Master in one of the most enlightened and progressive states in the whole world?

At the outset he was faced with two great difficulties—money and language. When he left France, Bernadotte was a rich man for he had placed his money in real estate and private investments that were solid and safe. He found that it was not at all easy to convert the French value of his property into Swedish currency. The Bourbons and Bonapartes were agreed on the point that he was not entitled to abstract the money from France, and the negotiations which followed were of long duration, and contained many examples of bitter animosity.

As for the language, here was a knotty problem that lasted throughout the full length of his reign. Bernadotte would not, or could not, learn Swedish. He acquired a few words of command which he used at military reviews, and some stock phrases for household usage, and that was all.

In the early days of his reign he imitated Napoleon in that he kept a large force of Secret Police, which were wholly unnecessary. He also conducted private and official interviews in his bedroom, where he would be seen reclining on his bed, wrapped in a dressing-gown and with his hands crossed behind his head. He had no hobbies and no vices, and appeared to derive his greatest pleasure from hard work. He loathed the smell of tobacco smoke, though he did not prohibit smoking in his presence; but whenever a visitor indulged in it, he invariably produced a bottle of scent from one of his pockets, which he soaked on his hair and dabbled over his face. His attitude towards his son tended to be irritable and impatient. He was seen at his best when acting as host towards guests who could understand French and who had seen military service. On these occasions he played the part of the flamboyant Gascon and preferred talking to listening.

The mode of life was tolerated by the people, but everybody could see that there was a gap somewhere that required filling. Nobody realised it better than the King himself—hence the imploring letters to Desirée to leave Paris and come to Stockholm. When at last she did arrive, the problems disappeared as though by magic. She became the shield between father and son. She reorganised the household in that dinner was served every night at six, followed by supper at ten. She saw to it that the guests were not confined to the military caste, but

included civilians, accompanied by their womenfolk. She was excessively, and sometimes imprudently, liberal to all who seemed to be in need of money. She did not try to prevent her husband from indulging in gasconades but, as has already been seen, she had the exclusive right to poke fun at him whenever he did so. Nobody else was allowed to do that. The most widely quoted story about her tells of a Swedish lady who boasted about her family, ancestry, and all her princely and aristocratic friends. Desirée listened to it all with wonderful patience and, when at last it came to an end, was heard to say, "Oh, dear ! And my father was only a merchant in Marseilles."

But times kept changing, not with the startling rapidity of the Napoleonic period, but still they were changing at a goodly pace, and even Desirée found it difficult to keep up with them. The family was forced to learn that there comes a period after every war which has entailed suffering and carnage on a large scale when countries undergo a sort of spiritual revolution ; when the minds of the people turn against the military leaders and the politicians who led them through the dark and turbulent days of strife. It is of course only a passing phrase, but it appears to be inevitable and unavoidable. After the Napoleonic Wars the first country to suffer was France, and the second, England ; it will be remembered that within fifteen years of the Battle of Waterloo the windows of the Duke of Wellington's London house were smashed by the mob. Then in the thirties, Sweden followed the example of France and England, and there was a wave of unpopularity against Bernadotte who replied to it with the words that "he was a man who did not like war, but at the same time was not afraid of it."

The coming of the eighteen-thirties also saw the appearance of the Liberal Party with democratic ideals, which became the forerunner of the Industrial Revolution. Bernadotte, in his distant days as soldier and administrator, had fought for these ideals with every fibre of his being. But the same Bernadotte, in his later days as Constitutional King, fought against them with even greater violence. His attitude in rigidly upholding Conservatism caused great problems in both his State and family, for it was known that his son was an ardent Liberal, who had the popular advantage over his father in that he spoke Swedish with perfect fluency.

The coming of the eighteen-forties found the King in his eightieth year, and passing through a period of political unpopularity which had been caused by an imprudent action of his own doing. During a financial crisis, the Treasury was in need of money, and the King advanced £70,000 out of his own privy purse. The money was duly accepted and expended, and after the crisis had passed the King called for repayment. He found himself faced with vigorous opposition from the Liberal benches, which grew to such an extent that there were even demands for his abdication. Yes, indeed, Bernadotte was actually told that he ought to abdicate in favour of his son !

At this point it should be noted that though the King was momentarily under a cloud, there was never any question about an alteration in the régime. The whole Swedish nation, Liberals and Conservatives alike, had seen enough of the Bernadotte Dynasty to know that it had come to stay. All the passing fits of temper and moments of irritation could not alter the fact that the King was a man of high scruples, and the Queen was a woman of unbounded generosity. Happy indeed is the land that is governed by such rulers.

So it was that when the crisis passed, just as every political crisis

passes, the old King regained the affections of his subjects and became, as before, a figure of universal reverence and respect. Indeed the politicians appeared to be ashamed of themselves at having adopted such an attitude towards this fiery old soldier, with his white head and stooping gait.

In the early days of 1844 Bernadotte had an accident. He had just arrived home one evening when, in getting out of his carriage, he slipped and fell down. The circumstances were very similar to those that took place with Charles Dickens some years later. The King was affected mentally by what was obviously a stroke. A few months later he died, at the age of eighty-one.

Thus passed Jean Baptiste Bernadotte : Soldier, Orator, Administrator and Obstacle Man. But it must be noted that all those titles become misnomers when we see him in his last and greatest role—as Constitutional King. He had been both the contemporary and rival of the great Napoleon. He had risen to greatness in a period which all men must study who wish to make their mark, either on the battlefield or in the debating chamber. He possesses no historical parallel. In the past there have been several Napoleons and, make no mistake, there will be many more in times to come. But there has only been one Bernadotte, and it is not easy to see how there ever can be another.

He had adapted himself skilfully to the many and varied parts that he was called upon to play, and was enabled to attain his final reward by upholding rigidly the high principles that he had adopted in his youth. He was in every respect a great man, whose life and character deserve far more study than they have hitherto received.

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